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ABSTRACT

The authors of this collection of essays make the major points that parental participation influences student performance, and that time spent with parents by school personnel results in better learning. Ira J. Gordon explains four models of parent-school-community relationships and cites research evidence of long-term effects of parent involvement programs. Dorothy Rich and colleagues list practical ways to involve parents directly in the education of their own children. Phyllis J. Hobson explains the organization of the District of Columbia Title I Parental Involvement Program and lists five essentials for parental involvement. Lois S. Steinberg reviews recent literature, discusses several new forms of parent participation and considers evidence of their potential effectiveness. Suzanne O'Shea reviews court rulings and analyzes the rights of parents to withdraw their children from instruction. Delmo Della-Dora shows how parents can participate at each step of the curriculum planning process. Ned S. Hubbell points to population shifts (more than two-thirds of all adults now do not have children in schools) and says that the way to communicate with both parents and nonparents is to get them involved in school affairs. John W. Alden says that service as a school volunteer is a form of citizen participation that many people would rather perform than be members of advisory councils. (Author/MLF)

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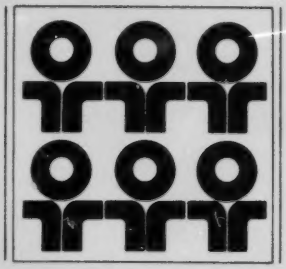

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Foreword

Benjamin P. Ebersole

The ring of respect encircling students, teachers, and parents is an essential relationship for effective learning. A break anywhere in the circle results in a breakdown in student performance. If there is close communication, cooperation, sincere caring, however, there seems to be no limit to what might happen — students learn more, teachers are more fulfilled, and parents feel better about their children and themselves.

Unfortunately, conditions too often do not promote this sense of mutual support and effort. Families are sometimes not very comfortable or comforting places in which to live. School personnel are not always as caring or committed as could be hoped for. Both homes and schools can be scarey places.

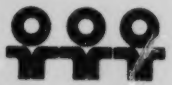
ASCD has a deep interest in having the school and the home engage in positive interaction. Parents need to know about not only the dramatic events reported by the media, but also about day-in and day-out school activities. They need to be involved; they need to participate. Educators must have the security and faith to believe that the more parents and other citizens are involved, the more they will understand and support the schools. If this doesn't happen, then something is wrong.

Partners: Parents and Schools addresses this important topic. The authors review some of the premises and practices of parent participation, they analyze the assumptions, report on parents' perceptions of the curriculum and the school, examine the constitutional and legal basis of the parent role for power sharing, and suggest ways the relationship might be more productive.

This document is perceptive, interesting, and valuable. In a balanced presentation, the authors make the major points that parental participation influences student performance, and that time spent with parents by school personnel results in better learning. ASCD is pleased to present this publication to its members, other professionals, and to parents, who are all, in the true sense of the word, educators.

Benjamin P. Ebersole
President, 1979-80

Introduction



Billy Reagan

With programs such as "Fail-Safe," the Houston, Texas, public schools are creating new relationships between home and school. Billy Reagan, Superintendent of Schools in Houston, is primarily responsible for the extensive parent involvement effort.

As educators search diligently for solutions to today's education problems it is important to take a long look at why these problems exist. The schools and the educational process have improved. We know more now than we have ever known before about the psychology of learning; we have more technology and media; teachers are as well prepared, if not better prepared, than ever before. Schools are providing educational programs never before offered. There are year round schools, alternative schools, extended day schools, tutorial programs, students paid to attend school, and a host of new organizational and instructional structures and modes. The list could go on and on relative to what has been done and is being done to improve the education of every person who attends school in the United States.

The difference in schools today does not lie primarily with what is being done or not being done by the schools. The difference is in the students. As we seek answers to educational problems today some of the facts are conclusive:

1. We serve a vastly different student population.
2. There is a tremendous increase in the amount of knowledge to be disseminated.
3. There is an unbelievable mobility of population.
4. There is a tremendous change in the family structure with more breakdown of marriages than ever before, a factor which creates a serious problem for children.
5. There is the trauma of desegregation, which often involves uprooting a stable community school environment.

Because the problems of education are not problems of the schools alone, parents can and must be involved in a meaningful way in the education of their children. However, rather than encouraging parent participation, schools are closing the doors. Parents are closed out by the new math; by educational jargon; and by a school day which, due to collective bargaining, no longer allows time for parent conferences.

In the past, parent organizations were content to sponsor school-wide events and money-raising activities. As discussed within the context of the following pages, the PTA is now making an effort to present a global concern and to change from a passive role to one of active participation in improving education.

If concerned persons will deal with the expectations of education versus the reality of what can be done with the available resources (including the time available to work with students), we can bridge the gap and bring the home and school closer together. But involving parents requires leadership by school personnel. Teachers must build partnerships with parents if they are to make them feel accepted and needed.

In the Houston Independent School District this became a reality in 1978 with the implementation of a parent assist program designated as "Operation Fail-Safe." We learned that parents were willing to come to the school to find out how to help their children. In exchange for their concern and participation, parents were given three things: a friendly, accepting atmosphere; the truth about their child's educational standing; and specific activities they could use to help their child improve. The first was accomplished through inservice and the latter two through the use of a computerized diagnosis and prescription.

Research in our district supports the position that "time on task," or the amount of time a student spends on a learning task, is commensurate with how much he or she will learn. Obviously, there is a limit to the amount of time each teacher can spend with each child in a room of 30 students. Worse still, because of absenteeism, mobility, and/or disinterest, the teacher often has even less time with certain children. Most of the children performing below grade level are those who enroll after the opening of school each year and who are often absent. These children can never catch up without extra assistance. Due to limited school resources and limited teaching time, the most logical source of assistance is from the parents. In Houston, Operation Fail-Safe has helped.

Parental involvement holds the greatest promise for meeting the needs of the child—it can be a reality rather than a professional dream. Of course, the bottom line is not only that involving parents holds the most realistic hope for individual children but it serves as a hope for renewing the public's faith in education. This faith is needed if public

schools are to continue as a strong institution in our democratic form of government, which, ironically, can only survive with a strong educational program.

The Effects of Parent Involvement on Schooling

Ira J. Gordon

Ira Gordon, noted scholar and designer of programs in early childhood education, died unexpectedly only a few months after presenting this paper at the ASCD Annual Conference in San Francisco in March 1978. Gordon explains four models of parent-school-community relationships and cites research evidence of long-term effects of parent involvement programs.

The title of this chapter suggests the acceptance of what is fast becoming an educational cliché — that is, that parents are teachers and not all learning takes place in school. Of course, this is not new; we know this instinctively. What is new is the attempt to place responsibility on the school to recognize this truth and to use it in the formal education of children. Therefore, it follows that parent involvement is useful and has a positive effect. But note the words "on schooling" which imply more than just effects on the child.

Several questions will be addressed here: Why do we want parent involvement in education? What are our assumptions and goals? How are parents being involved? What approaches have been and are being used? What have we learned about effectiveness?

Why Do We Want Parent Involvement?

What are some of the reasons for parent involvement? The basic reason is our belief that parent involvement enables children to achieve better and learn more. In other words, we assume that the behavior of parents and other family members influences child learning. The evidence for this is fairly widespread, based on longitudinal studies in England, international surveys of educational achievement, and a variety of socio-

logical and psychological studies within the United States. In particular, three sets of family factors have been found to be associated with intellectual behavior and personality development (Gordon, 1969). All of these, today, may seem obvious, but they were not necessarily obvious in the early and mid 1960's when those of us attempting to institute new parent involvement programs ran into the cynics and the sceptics. The first set is *demographic* factors. Sociologically, these are the clearest indicators, but in terms of educational program development they are least susceptible to change. These include family organization, family income, ethnic background, quality of housing (crowded, for instance), and social class membership.

If we turn to process variables — that is, the behavior of family members toward each other — then we have two additional sets, one cognitive and the other emotional. The *cognitive* set consists of such items as the amount of academic guidance families provide for their children; the thought level and style in the home; the language level and style in the home; the use of the neighborhood and community as an educational resource, and the planning for such use; the perception of the parents that they are indeed teachers of their children, and their actual modes of direct instruction of their children; the educational aspirations parents hold for their children; the existence and use of external resources such as day-care centers, nurseries, kindergartens; the intellectuality and reading encouraged within the home, not only the existence of books, magazines, and newspapers, but the modeling of their use for the child; the amount of and type of verbal interaction, not only among family members, but more particularly between adults and infants and young children. Obviously, all homes are verbal, but the key element seems to be the interaction of adult and child in the language domain.

The *emotional* factors are such items as whether or not a particular adult is consistent in the management procedures used with the child, as well as the expectations held and the communication of these expectations; if there are several adults and older children in the family, whether there is consistency among these people in the way the young child is handled; the emotional security and self-esteem of the parents; the parents' belief in the amount of influence they have over their own environment and their own fate; whether or not they are protective of the infant; whether or not they are willing to devote time to the child. Here I would stress that even in single parent homes, or where both parents may be working, the ability of the family to set time aside for the child, a children's hour if you will rather than the cocktail hour, seems to be an important factor. Other variables, such as the orderliness

and routine of the family, the existence of a pattern of work habits, a trusting attitude toward other social agencies, all seem to influence a child's intellectual development.

Parent Impact Model

If this is so, and the data are clear enough, then one might say that the first goal for parent involvement is to improve the family's capabilities to provide in the home the type of learning environment that accentuates the positive elements of the cognitive and emotional factors. Although many parent involvement efforts aim toward this goal, they have been accused of operating from a deficit view of the family. I believe, and I think the data support the fact, that these programs actually show a strong belief in the family and in the parents' ability to learn, to grow, to accept information and use it for the family's own good. We can identify this as the *parent impact model.* Home visit programs, group classes, Head Start in many of its ramifications, Home Start, early childhood education in California and Florida, and many Title III programs, although not necessarily purely impact models, are illustrative of the notion that parent involvement equals parent education.

Comprehensive services. A second assumption is that the child's health, nutrition, and social and psychological development influence academic learning. The school, as the only major agency in continuing contact with the family, is seen as the provider of health services, counseling and guidance services, mental health services, dental services. In Head Start, Follow Through, and Title I these are called comprehensive services and may be part of the parent impact model. The goal of this approach is for the school to provide to the family non-academic services and information which, it is expected, will enable the child to come to school more able to learn.

A recent survey of public views of schools indicates that parents want schools to engage in parent education on drugs, alcohol, and dating (Gallup, 1977). In other words, parents are seeking help from the school in areas other than the "basics."

To some degree, the parent impact model ignores demographic factors, or at least recognizes that these factors are broad and that tremendous individual family differences exist within any ethnic group, social class, or other type of grouping.

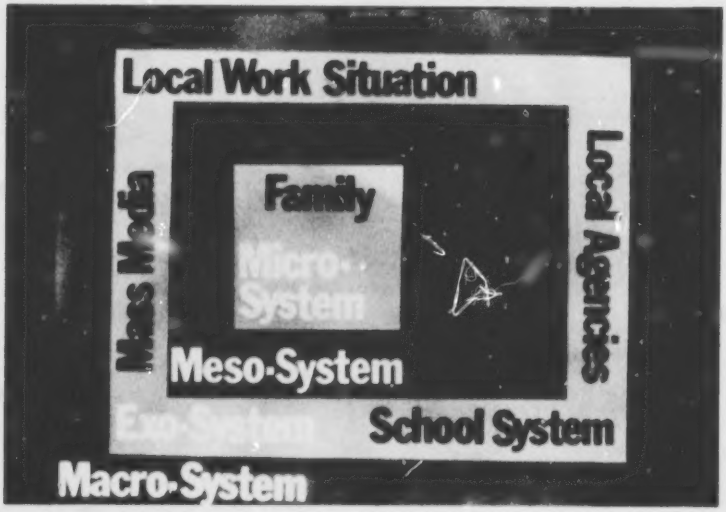
Systems context. This model, and others which I will discuss, can be placed in a systems context. A systems, or transactional, approach recognizes that no one agency operates in isolation, that life is always

reciprocal, that what goes on within a family is influenced by many forces outside the family, and that the family in turn plays a role in influencing the variety of social forces. From a transactional perspective we need to place the home in the context of the society. I have borrowed from the work of Orville Brim and Urie Bronfenbrenner in developing the pictorial representation of the systems approach (see below).

Let us begin with the family. The parent impact model assumes we can influence the roles and relationships and the amounts of time people spend with each other. That is a micro-system view, but the family exists inside a second system consisting of the neighborhood school, the neighborhood itself, local stores, recreation facilities. This system, too, exists inside the exo-system which includes the school system, local media, work settings, local agencies, transportation networks, and the like. Finally, we can place that system in the context of the American or any other social macro-system in which our beliefs and behaviors in the economic, political, legal, educational, and communication realms all influence the other systems down to and including the family, and to some degree are in turn, through democratic processes, in this country at least, influenced by the subsystems.

School Impact Model

This leads to a third assumption about parent education or parent involvement, and a third goal. The third assumption is that if we can make schools more responsive to parents, in other words, if the micro-



system can influence that second system, if we can get teachers to be more attuned to and more understanding of family variables and of the culture of the home, then this will lead to better achievement by the child. It is also important to recognize that some people who hold this view think that school responsiveness to the parent, whether or not it leads to child achievement, is an important goal in and of itself, because it rests on the fundamental American belief of lay control of the schools. In this view, responsiveness in its own right is an important goal.

Educational improvement thus might be measured not by child achievement, but by parent influence and participation in the school. This view reflects the Jacksonian tradition in America, and holders of it design programs to redress the balance of professional versus lay control, to reduce the decision making power of the bureaucrat, and to increase participatory democracy. If one holds this assumption, parent involvement, then, means involvement in the classroom and in the school aimed at modifying the teacher and the school system. One does not necessarily require, through this involvement, that parents will learn to improve their own teaching. This is the *school impact model.*

The Head Start and Follow Through legislation which required the formation of policy advisory councils and now policy councils, the community school movement with its change from a school building being open 24 hours a day serving a variety of needs to a school which has citizen involvement in the decision-making process, the legislation in states to require citizens' advisory councils, the efforts in New York City years ago to establish local control, Public Law 94-142 which requires that the parent of a child with special needs be involved in the decision-making process about educational programming, are all reflective, in various ways, of the school impact model.

Comprehensive services, from this perspective, are still very important. The difference is that a school impact orientation also implies an agency impact orientation. That is, there should be parent involvement, or even parent control, of the delivery of medical and dental services, for instance.

In the parent impact model, the family learns to deal with agencies as they are; in the school (or agency) impact model, the goal of parent involvement is to change the agency, to make it more responsive to the family as it is.

Community Impact Model

The fourth assumption for parent involvement is that everything relates to everything else. This is the ultimate transactional, or the ulti-

mate systems, view. From this assumption, any program should be designed not only to impact within any system, such as the micro-system or the exo-system, but must involve all elements. In the process, all agencies change internally and also in their relationships to one another. This is the *community impact model.*

An example of this would be the formerly Florida and now North Carolina Follow Through model, the Parent Education model (Gordon, 1972), which is really a misnomer. In this model, or from this perspective, there are a number of roles that parents may play, and should play, which are designed to influence their own behavior, but also to influence the agencies with which they come in contact (Gordon, 1970). The wheel depicts this approach (see above).

The wheel has six spokes, but one could add or subtract, depending upon how one wishes to categorize. Parental roles are purposely depicted in the form of a wheel, rather than a ladder, because a ladder implies a hierarchy — that is, that one role is more important than another. The wheel implies equivalence — that is, each spoke is necessary. Obviously, in any program, different parents will choose to play different roles as depicted on the wheel. Some people are comfortable as classroom volunteers, others as decision makers, others simply as recipients of information or observers. Some parents do not necessarily wish to come near the school, but are delighted to have home visitors to give them ideas and suggestions about activities to do at home with the child. In turn, parents furnish the visitor with their ideas and suggestions about what is useful for parents to do with children. What is important in the community impact model is that there must be parents playing all of these roles in order for the wheel to turn efficiently (Gordon and Breivogel, 1976).

Evidence of Success

What have we learned? What is the evidence that these models work? If the goal is to improve pupil achievement, what do we know of the effect of parent involvement on educational achievement?

I will not describe the evaluation and research methodological problems inherent in evaluating and assessing whether parent involvement makes a difference, except to say that the problems are many and they are complex, especially if one attempts to assess the national efforts. For example, a recent Follow Through evaluation has led to great controversy among evaluators as well as program people as to whether the essentially equivocal results are due to the programs or to the problems inherent in the evaluation design. What I shall do, then, is to be selective and not encyclopedic, and attempt to present some information, model by model. It must be understood, however, that models are just that, and there is no one-to-one correspondence between model and program.

- The *parent impact model* can be examined at two levels: its application in the preschool years, and its application in the school years.

Preschool. What evidence exists that a preschool parent involvement program has lasting effects on the scholastic performance of children in school? I am delighted to report that there is considerable evidence from a number of programs, that the evidence is fairly consistent across these programs, and that the evidence is positive — there are indeed long-term effects of parent involvement programs. There is a consortium of early intervenors, several of whom intervened by means of the parent impact model. The latest data from the consortium indicate that, as long as ten years after the programs ended, children from families who participated in the pre-school years in parent impact model programs are still doing better in school than comparison or control children. This data was reported to the American Association for the Advancement of Science by Irving Lazar (1977) who chairs the consortium and who had no hand in the intervention programs.

Specifically, the data on the Florida program show that at age 10, scores on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale are about 10 points higher for those children whose families were involved in the program from the time the child was three months old until the child was three years old than control children's scores (Gordon, 1978). Analysis of school records when the children were in third grade reveals that 30% of the control children had been assigned to special education classes and only about 6% of children who were in the program for two or three years, ending again at age three, were so assigned. Further, there are data, to which

I'll refer later, indicating that at age six there were significant differences in the home environments of these children in ways that relate to the demographic, cognitive, and emotional variables mentioned earlier (Guinagh and Gordon, 1976).

In 1975, Barbara Goodson and Robert Hess reviewed about 20 of the major preschool parent programs and reached a conclusion similar to the current findings of the consortium. They were conservative because the longitudinal data were not as complete, but again long-lasting effects of parent impact model programs were indicated. The Parent-Child Development Centers in New Orleans, Houston, and Birmingham, which were research centers, were able to demonstrate positive effects. These programs are now being replicated. The Yakima Home Base model, originally a Title III program based on the Florida infant program, is a validated program being replicated at 20 other sites.

School. But what about parent impact programs for school-age children? Many of these are currently under way, but not many have elaborate evaluation designs or the capabilities for carefully assessing their outcomes. Again, our Follow Through experience may be useful here. If we examine the parent impact element inside the general community impact model, we stressed and are still stressing parent education by means of home visitations and the presentation to parents of a set of desirable teaching behaviors. We have evidence, admittedly sparse because of the costs of collection, which indicates that when other factors are held constant, the quantity of home visits seems to be the single most important variable influencing achievement of all of those depicted on the wheel. We also have, in a dissertation by Olmsted (1977), evidence that there are differences between experimental and control parents in knowledge and use of our desirable teaching behaviors, and further, that there is a relationship between the use of these behaviors and achievement.

I did a search of ERIC files and of *Psychological Abstracts* to locate studies of the effectiveness of the parent impact model. There are 14 such studies with some data other than those reported by the consortium (Lazar, 1977) or in the Goodson and Hess (1975) collection (Table 1). The studies were conducted all over the country, from Syracuse to Arizona, from Cincinnati to Seattle, and were funded by Research and Development centers, by the National Institute of Education, or by school districts. Some were students' dissertations. Of these studies, ten demonstrate positive results and four show no significant differences as a result of the programs. Many of these studies are methodologically

flawed; for some I have insufficient data from the descriptions to tell what precisely was done or measured.

The only way to approach this set is to use a very weak "signs" test. That is, more of these turned out positive than negative. But they are an extremely mixed bag, and probably tell us much more about the state of the art than the effectiveness of programs. They differed in types of children served, nature of the program, children's grade level, length and intensity of program, psychological learning rationale, and probably on other variables as well. They do *not* add up to solid evidence one way or the other.

We can use them heuristically to point the way toward the design and implementation of methodologically sound programs. An examination of this material plus the much sounder data sets of the consortium and the programs in the Goodson and Hess review leads to a set of conclusions: parent impact models are generally positive when they are carefully planned, are structured, have an educational focus, and when they include parents working at home with their children as a major delivery system. A further conclusion is that results do not show up immediately; they take time. Any short program—six weeks, a semester, or the like—is not going to have any worthwhile impact. The program needs to be conducted over time, and then it will be some time before results show up in child achievement.

• *School impact model.* I could find no careful studies of achievement, but as I indicated earlier, elements of the school impact model are to be found in many of the Head Start and parent impact programs, as well as in those programs using a community impact model.

Remember that the goal of many school impact programs was political, that is, control, rather than immediate child achievement. There is, of course, the tacit assumption that the model will lead to long-range effects on child learning. But it is difficult if not impossible to demonstrate any direct connection between changes in control and child achievement.

• *Community impact model.* In addition to the national Follow Through evaluation, I could find four studies of effects on children, all in the last few years, of programs using a community impact model (Table 2). Two of these are dissertations on Follow Through, one from Florida State University, by Kinard. The extent of parent involvement was measured by service on the Policy Advisory Council, attendance at meetings, participation in the classroom, and teacher perception of involvement. In a study confined to Hillsborough County, Florida, Kinard found that

(1) children who attended Head Start and Follow Through programs tend to achieve higher scores than those attending only Head Start; (2) children with directly involved parents tend to achieve higher scores than [their] siblings . . .; (3) parental involvement tends to have a greater effect on achievement of second siblings than of first siblings; (4) parental involvement and duration of program had a significant effect on both siblings (Kinard, 1974, pp. 50-51).

One should be cautious; it may be that parent involvement in this program is a symptom of other parental strengths and concerns. However, the vertical diffusion effect suggests that the program does play a role.

Another study, by Roberts at Teachers College, was part of a larger Office of Education sponsored study of Follow Through. He compared ego development of children in the Florida program with those in highly academic Follow Through models and those in a more affective-oriented classroom Follow Through approach. On the measure of ego-development, the children at the two parent education sites were further advanced than children in all three other programs, and were two years ahead on his Piagetian-Kohlbergian type of measure over children at the academic model sites. The study needs replication and should be seen as suggestive rather than definitive.

A study sponsored by the Washington State Department of Education (McConnell, 1976) examined a bilingual mini-school tutoring project. The report indicates that parents and community members were active in program management decisions involving organization matters, reviewing input into funding proposals, hiring of teaching staff, use of parent funds, and participation in program evaluation. The program used paraprofessional teachers to provide bilingual, multicultural education to children of migrant and seasonal farm workers, and family members participated by acting as teachers or teaching assistants, assisting with cultural heritage activities, and providing support services. While obviously not a complete community impact model, it fits into that category. The report indicates that the program met or exceeded its goals for reading achievement and academic achievement. The last study (Gross, 1974) indicated the effective development of a comprehensive program by an inner-city school.

As indicated earlier, I have been selective because there must be literally thousands of parent involvement programs under way at the present time in this country. What is reported here represents some of the basic literature and is obviously not complete.

Turning to our own Follow Through program, we attempt to involve parents at all spokes of the wheel, and have as a goal not only the academic achievement of children, but also the creation of a new working

relationship between home and school. We believe that educational achievement will be influenced not only by utilization of the parent impact approach, but also by utilization of the school impact approach, and the combination of both in a community impact model.

But how about educational achievement? I indicated earlier that the Follow Through final evaluation report was equivocal. Nevertheless, assuming a certain degree of validity of the data, the Abt general summary, using as criteria Metropolitan Achievement Test scores, indicates that the parent education model is third among all models in influencing educational achievement (Table 3). The models which seem to do more are those highly organized, academically geared approaches. But if one can fall back on the Cornell consortium data, it may be that the long-term lasting effects of the parent model will be sustained, while the programs which seem to be more effective in the short run may not last as the children move up the grades. That remains to be seen.

A reanalysis of the Abt report by a group under the chairmanship of Ernest R. House indicates that, from their perspective, the parent education model is first among models in influencing reading achievement. However, they indicate that the top four models are probably so close that they have about equal impact. Thus a program from a parent orientation does as well as or better in reading than a much more costly program devoted to a highly organized, rigid, or rigorous attack on the "basics."

But let us recall that a community impact model should not be measured only by child achievement. What impact has been made on schools and schooling? the community? career development? the systems surrounding the school? We have a variety of measures of the extent of parent involvement in the school. These may, of course, be seen as process evaluation measures, but we see them as product measures. They indicate the extent of the changed relationship between home and school. Table 4 presents the data on some of these. To place these in context, over 6,000 families were in the program in 1976-77, and 153,567 home visits were made. Over 1,800 parents were at Policy Advisory Council meetings Decisions by PAC committees included program budget, activities of PAC, home learning activities, personnel selection, classroom volunteering activities, comprehensive services.

Case study and interview type data about program effects on school and community are currently being collected, and the longitudinal files for unsynthesized information are being examined. These effects can be categorized as community, school system, and personal, such as career development. Here are examples from some of the 11 communities in the first wave of our studies. We expect similar information from all.

• In Richmond, Virginia, the parents have established

1. A Discovery Room at South Hampton (a day-care center established within the school where pre-school children are kept while their mothers serve as volunteers in the classroom. Mothers take turns volunteering and caring for the children in the Discovery Room);

2. A center for pre-schoolers who were unable to get into Head Start programs (capacity filled). Program operates for two to three hours daily and the children are taught by their parents;

3. Several Parent Centers in non-Follow Through schools.

• In Yakima, Washington, there have been spin-offs throughout the school system and community, such as:

1. Home Base program for ages 0-3, now nationally validated, part of the diffusion network and adopted in 20 communities

2. Backyard Center program of playgroups with parent education as a focus for middle-class parents

3. Guide teacher programs in the junior and senior high school. Each 7th and 10th grader is assigned a teacher who volunteers to make periodic home visits

4. Hospital pre-natal program has been modified so that 1/5 of sessions are on parenting, with follow up when baby is 6 and 10 weeks of age

5. Deaf program—work with parents in home

6. Titles I, III, and IV programs have been modified on the Follow Through model

7. Media efforts include two weekly columns in the *Yakima Daily Sun*, written by Follow Through staff, one on discussion of home activities and teaching behaviors, the other on home-school partnership.

Political spin-offs are evident in Hillsborough County, Florida, where a woman who had served as Follow Through PAC chairperson entered the election for school board members. She did not win, but made a strong showing in the final results. The impact of this event on other Follow Through parents is as important as the event itself. Many parents registered to vote and voted for the first time in a school board election. Parents became aware of the educational issues and of the positions of the various candidates. Finally, Follow Through parents became more aware of the role and function of the school board as it relates to the schools in general and to Follow Through in particular. They are active in interactions with the County Commission as well as the school board.

Another of our communities is Fairfield County, South Carolina,

where Follow Through facilitated communication and a sharing of power. As a researcher in the community described it, blacks have made significant progress in finding inroads into policy making bodies where they were systematically excluded a decade ago. For example, blacks hold two of the five county council seats and four of the nine board of education seats. The researcher states that it is reasonable to conclude that Follow Through has served a function analogous to that of the honey bee in the cross-pollination process. This is supported by comments made by people in Fairfield County. Follow Through promoted parent involvement in the schools in particular and in the community in general. Through involvement, parents developed skills and confidence that encouraged greater participation in the affairs of the community. Elected and appointed officials are sensitive to the needs and concerns of Follow Through parents which is suggestive of their political clout.

Another area is career development. This has occurred in many programs, not just Follow Through, and in all our communities. However, the following gives some indication of the influence that being a paraprofessional home visitor has on careers. In Houston, Texas, for example, 55 of 61 parent educators have raised their level of education. Thirty-nine indicate they acquired additional education through the program, eight did it on their own, and four used personal and Follow Through resources. At entry into the work, six had more than high school (including GED); now 42 have post-high school training.

Conclusions

What can we say? Given the assumption that the family as a microcosm influences the learning of the child, programs dealing directly with the family, especially preschool programs, but also school programs, affect in a positive fashion the learning and development of the child. They may be doing this because they are focusing on the family as a learning environment rather than on the child as a learner. For example, our analysis of our longitudinal data from the infant project shows us that scores on the Home Environment Review, which measures such things as parent awareness of child development, press for reading, provision of reading materials or other materials in the home, the utilization of neighborhood and community as a learning environment, show significant differences between experimental and control families at age six (Guinagh and Gordon, 1976). Further, these scores on such a measure are predictive of assignment of the child to regular or special education classes at third grade, and of scores on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Form R, at age 10 (Gordon, 1978).

The data are not clear, and may even be nonexistent, on a straight school impact model. The data on a comprehensive model, such as the Florida/North Carolina parent education program, illustrate that such a program not only increases home-school participation and partnership, with many social ramifications, but also holds its own very well in influencing the educational achievement of children.

I advocate a comprehensive or community impact model as being more in tune with a systems approach. But there can be many ways to design and implement programs using this model.

On the basis of this analysis, it is clear that we still need to experiment, even on a national scale. Further, program developers need to state clearly their philosophical, psychological, and political assumptions and deduce their models from them. They need to state their goals for the family, the school, the community, as well as for the children, if they hold such goals. They then have the obligation to measure them.

Further, I advocate that we learn four major lessons from the past decade:

1. The concept of sponsorship, or university/school system collaboration, is a viable and powerful vehicle for change.

2. National efforts need to be continued, with the evaluation design planned by the stake-holders *before* the program is implemented, so that we can honestly assess impact.

3. Change takes time. Efforts need to be of some duration, probably at least three years, and measurement of impact on all concerned needs to be built into a longitudinal design to occur at stated periods after the program has ended.

4. We have learned enough to encourage local efforts to develop parent involvement programs, but such efforts should always include careful evaluation components. Where possible, I would recommend that local groups work with university people to get the best design possible.

In 1967, we were severely challenged for using federal dollars to "teach mothers to play with their babies." In 1978, this now seems, for many, an acceptable activity. Educators need to continue such programs, but we should raise our sights to look more broadly at our role in working *with* parents to enhance child development and strengthen family life. It is essential that

> . . . our efforts not continue to be piecemeal, unsynthesized, small-scale and sporadic, but that they be placed in the broader social system context. We need to tie, where possible, parent education efforts to work, family income, and housing and zoning programs, medicare and medicaid, teacher education, professional education of social workers, psychologists. . . .

The American family, school, and many elements of the system at all levels are in a state of flux. Change is not pleasant, and planned change is not always either possible or the outcome predictable. . . . We need to ask ourselves not only the tactical questions, which relate to the state of the art and to what we have learned about the "how-to's," the retrospective questions; but also the strategic issues—why are we doing this? How does it fit into the larger social scheme? What do we hope to accomplish within the narrow confines of a specific program? What else ought to be done? What are our basic assumptions about people—what they need and want, how they learn and grow, what we desire for them? These prospective questions face us and the administration (Gordon, 1977, p. 78).

Models of School-Parent-Community Involvement

Parent Impact Model

Assumption: The behavior of parents and other family members influences the child's learning.

Goal: Improve the family's capabilities to provide in the home the type of learning environment that develops readiness for learning.

Comprehensive Services Model

Assumption: The child's health, nutrition, and social and psychological development influence academic learning.

Goal: Provide non-academic services and information to the family which will enable the child to come to school more able to learn.

School Impact Model

Assumption: If schools are more responsive to parents, this will lead to better achievement by the child.

Goal: Make schools more responsive to parents as they are.

Community Impact Model

Assumption: Everything relates to everything else.

Goal: Change all agencies both internally and as they relate to one another.

Table 1. Effectiveness Studies of School-Age Parent Impact Programs

Investigator	Date	Place	Program	Participants	Measures	Results
A. E. Buchanan	1969	Wisconsin	Parent-teacher conferences (6 in 12 wks.) homework	83 second graders—high, medium, and low achievers	unspecified post-test	mixed; can't see clear effects of conferences
F. Niedermeyer	1969	Los Angeles	90-minute training session plus unspecified time in receiving weekly school information using contingency management	18 control, 56 experimental parents of kindergarten children	reading achievement	positive
R. J. Crosset	1972	Cincinnati	Parents observe children in reading group and receive materials for work at home	Low socioeconomic black parents of first grade children in one school	level of parent participation	positive
					reading scores	NSD
W. A. Duff	1972	Los Angeles	Teaching parents at home a set of behaviors to increase child achievement, 6 sessions	16 experimental, 16 control, fifth grade underachievers	classroom scores in English	positive
					teacher satisfaction	positive

Table 1. (Continued)

Investigator	Date	Place	Program	Participants	Measures	Results
J. B. Fudala	1972	Tucson	Parents attending child speech therapy classes	46 children in 6 regular classes. All children had articulatory disorders. 46 control	articulation test	positive
L. T. Hirst	1972	Kentucky	5 30-minute periods each wk. for 16 wks. of reading practice at home with parent as tutor. Parents received orientation.	48 sixth grade boys and girls in two elementary schools, 48 control	vocabulary, comprehension, & word study	NSD
J. H. Wise	1972	Washington, D.C., Child Care Center	Parent as home instructor in reading	19 experimental, 19 control	California Test of Basic Skills	positive
					WRAT	positive
R. Henderson & R. Swanson	1973	Tucson	Home visits by paraprofessionals who trained mothers in question-asking skills	30 mothers of Papago children, first grade	achievement tests	positive
B. Henry	1974	Syracuse	Fathers read to boys 6 mos. prior to kindergarten	All boys in a N.Y. state kindergarten	reading readiness test	positive

C. Woods	1974	Mesa, Arizona	Parents received twice weekly instruction in working with children, making reading games and teaching one day a week in kindergarten classroom.	40 children from 14 kindergarten classrooms in five schools; 40 control	Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis Test	positive
J. A. McKinney	1975	Miami	Teaching parents tutoring skills two hrs. a wk. for 15 weeks	50 parents (black, white, & Spanish) 50 control children.	achievement	positive
					parental attitudes toward school	positive
S. F. Uhl	1975	Chicago	Taped PET, 9 weekly 2-hr. sessions	14 experimental, 14 control parents of 26 fifth graders	reading, math, self-esteem	positive
T. E. Izzo	1976	Long Island	Programmed home reading instruction; psychotherapy group discussion Home VS psychotherapy VS control group design	64 third grade under-achieving pupils	reading achievement	NSD
					maternal attitudes	
Utah State University, Exceptional Child Center	1976	rural Utah	Self-contained instructional packages, not fully implemented	Parents of lowest three children in 50 classes (150 children), grades 2-6	parent teaching package in language and math	negative

Table 2. Effectiveness Studies of School-Age Community Impact Programs

Investigator	Date	Place	Program	Participants	Measures	Results
J. E. Kinard	1974	Hillsborough County, Florida	Parent Education, Follow Through	170 sibling pairs in grades 2-5 and parents	MAT	positive
					Parent Involvement questionnaire	positive
M. J. Gross and others	1974	Washington, D.C.	Comprehensive development program for staff, parents, and community	inner-city elementary school	student achievement	positive
					community participation	positive
B. McConnell	1976	Washington State	Bilingual, multicultural, intra- and interstate, extensive involvement of migrant parents and community members	169	Wide Range Achievement Test, math & reading	positive
					Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	positive
					local measures	positive
J. Roberts	1974	8 communities	Comparison of parent education, behavior analysis, direct instruction, Bank Street	308 third graders	ego development	positive
						PE>others

Table 3. Effects of Models, Follow Through National Evaluation Reanalysis*

Model	Number of Sites	Total Reading	Total Math	Abt** Basic Skills and Cognitive Conceptual	Reading, Math, Spelling, Language
Parent Education	8	1	5	3	4
Direct Instruction	11	2	1	1	1
Bank Street	6	3	13	8	6
Behavioral Analysis	7	4	3	7	3
SEDL	5	5	4	4	5
Mathemagenic	3	7	2	2	2
Responsive Education	9	6	8	5	7

* Includes only models ranked in first five in any category. Differences among models are not profound.

** R. B. Anderson and others. *Education as Experimentation: A Planned Variation Model.* Vols. IV—A-D. Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Associates, Inc., 1977.

Adapted from E. R. House and others. *No Simple Answer: Critique of the "Follow Through" Evaluation.* Urbana: University of Illinois, Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum. Tables 5 and 7.

Table 4. Schooling Impact of the Parent Education Follow Through Model (Ten Communities)

Variable	Percentage of Families Involved Minimum	Median	Maximum
Parent participation in classroom	28	55	84
Engagement in classroom instructional activities	19	36	75
Attendance at PAC meetings	13	33	53
Home Visitations, at least 5/6 of those planned	55	89	98

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Families as Educators of Their Own Children

Dorothy Rich, James Van Dien, Beverly Mattox

Based on their years of experience at the Home and School Institute, Dorothy Rich and her colleagues list practical ways to involve parents directly in the education of their own children.

"One parent is worth a thousand teachers."

This ancient Chinese proverb illustrates what many professional educators have always known intuitively and what recent research confirms: the family critically influences the learning of the child.

Schooling rests upon an assumption so fundamental that it is taken for granted. The assumption is that the environment of the home and community is conducive to and supportive of academic achievement. What schooling is able to accomplish depends, more perhaps than has been recognized or admitted, upon the cooperation and support of the home.

In 1978, the Home and School Institute (HSI) conducted a survey of school and family/community practices for the Maryland State Department of Education. Also surveyed were the policy-making and administrative structures which support the outreach efforts of schools to family and community at the local educational agency (LEA) level. We believe this has been a unique effort to look at the extent and variety of programs and practices available within a state.

Some of the key findings from this survey are summarized here,[1] and are useful in providing a picture of how school systems have approached the challenge of family involvement in education. The survey

[1] Home and School Institute. *Survey of Home/School/Community Programs and Practices in the State of Maryland.* Report submitted to the Maryland State Department of Education, October 1978.

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found many programs and a number of "promising practices." Almost all the elements of a comprehensive plan for school and family involvement could be identified as existing somewhere in the state, but not together anywhere.

The following less favorable findings give cause for concern:

1. Very limited support for parents to be directly involved in the education of their children.

2. A general lack of clear policy guidelines and coordinated planning. Responsibilities are often divided among a number of offices. Usually parent involvement is treated as an "extra."

3. Understaffing and underbudgeting for family involvement components. If staff time and budget allotments are good measures of an institution's priorities, family involvement cannot be viewed as a commitment of high order.

4. Proliferation of programs and practices on an ad hoc basis in response to specific needs and problems, with a resulting imbalance in the opportunities available. For example, one school may have a plethora of programs, while another a few miles away may have very little to offer.

5. Preponderant influence of federal programs and guidelines. Title I and Title IV-C programs are heavily represented among those identified as strong and successful. While federal support has permitted the opportunity for the expansion of activities and experimentation, it raises the question as to what extent practices would be institutionalized and supported at the local level if federal supports were withdrawn. A corollary to this is the predominance of advisory councils, mandated under federal guidelines, as a favored mode of participation.

6. Lack of solid evaluation of family involvement programs and practices. This, of course, is directly related to the limited staffing and budget support available. Much of the data available is the reporting of gross numbers participating with little attention given to quality of program, elements of success, or impact.

7. Pivotal influence of the principal at the building level. What happens with regard to parent involvement in a particular school is in large part determined by the philosophy and the priorities of the principal.

8. Lack of programs at the secondary level. Generally speaking the opportunities for involvement decline markedly as students move up the age-grade ladder.

9. Difficulty in reaching out to a broad segment of the community and in sustaining participation. Involving working parents and single parents was often specifically mentioned as a problem.

10. Widespread perception among school administrators that family involvement is a kind of general public relations effort for the school system rather than a meaningful way of sharing educational accountability for the academic achievement of children.

The overall conclusion to be drawn from these findings is that parent involvement is still seen as a peripheral activity that has not been integrated into the main work of the schools. This essentially "PR" approach to parent involvement is precisely what alienates many parents and leads to charges among parent activists of school "manipulation" or "placation."[2]

It may be unwise to overgeneralize from the experience of one state. However, it should be pointed out that the local educational agencies selected for the Maryland study represent in many ways the diversity of the nation in microcosm. Rural areas, market cities dominating a rural hinterland, suburban areas, a central city, and areas undergoing rapid demographic change were included in the survey. The findings also accord with many of those reported by Steinberg elsewhere in this volume.[3]

In fairness, it should be noted that the results of the Maryland study are scarcely surprising. Family involvement in education, keyed to raising children's achievement, is still at a "pre-scientific" stage of development. Local experimentation has provided a broad base of experience and practice, although it has also produced poorly documented efforts and the "reinvention of the wheel" on more than one occasion. It is our position that a sufficient data base exists to begin to place these efforts on a more systematic basis which could work a quiet revolution in our approach to education and substantially raise academic achievement.

Establishing Priorities

Given the bewildering array of current programs and alternative modes of parent participation available, where do those concerned with increasing the effectiveness of schooling, whether they be policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents, or the lay public, begin? What are the basic premises and assumptions from which one can start to build meaningful parent involvement? Gordon correctly asserts that variety of modes of participation should be available.[4]

[2] Sherry Arnstein. "Eight Rungs on the Ladder of Citizen Participation." In: Edgar Colin and Barry Passett, editors. *Citizen Participation: Effecting Community Change*. New York: Prager, 1971.

[3] See Steinberg, pp. 48-50, 54-56, in this volume.

[4] See Gordon, p. 9, in this volume.

Our experience suggests, however, that priority attention should be given to developing the mode of participation which directly involves parents in the education of their own child. This is the basic, most fundamentally meaningful form of participation from which other modes can flow. Gordon terms this "The Parent Impact Model," and it is often referred to as the "parent-as-tutor" approach.[5]

The reasons for this position are twofold. First, it is the approach which a continuing line of research indicates is most directly linked to improved academic achievement. In addition to the evidence already cited by Gordon in this volume, two studies emanating from Stanford should be mentioned. *Parent Involvement in Compensatory Education Programs* assessed the major models of parent involvement that evolved in the 1960's and found in general that the evidence supported participation of "parents-as-tutors" of their children.[6] In *Parents as Teachers of Young Children*, the more recent Stanford study, the authors state:

> As a group, the programs involving parents as teachers consistently produced significant immediate gains in children's IQ scores, and seemed to alter in a positive direction the teaching behavior of parents.[7]

The second reason for this position is that it offers the greatest opportunity for widespread involvement and sustained participation. Programs which require attendance at meetings or involvement in school activities during the day will necessarily have limited participation. The need to reach out to single parents and to families in which both parents work is a special concern. Furthermore, the parent-as-tutor approach appeals to the most basic parental motivation for involvement in the first place—the desire to help one's child do better in school.

Parents have generally turned to political activism and demands for shared control only when frustrated by what they perceive as a lack of responsiveness to their needs and concerns. Participation in advisory councils is difficult to maintain over the long term. Experience to date suggests that the creation of a political constituency, where none exists, will be a slow and time-consuming process. Many schools have found it difficult to identify willing candidates to serve on advisory councils and have undergone the frustration and embarrassment of poor turn out for community council elections.

[5] See Gordon, p. 6, in this volume.

[6] Stanford Research Institute. *Parent Involvement in Compensatory Education Programs*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Planning, Budgeting, and Evaluation, U.S. Office of Education, 1973.

[7] Barbara Goodson and Robert Hess. *Parents as Teachers of Young Children: An Evaluative Review of Some Contemporary Concepts and Programs*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University, 1975.

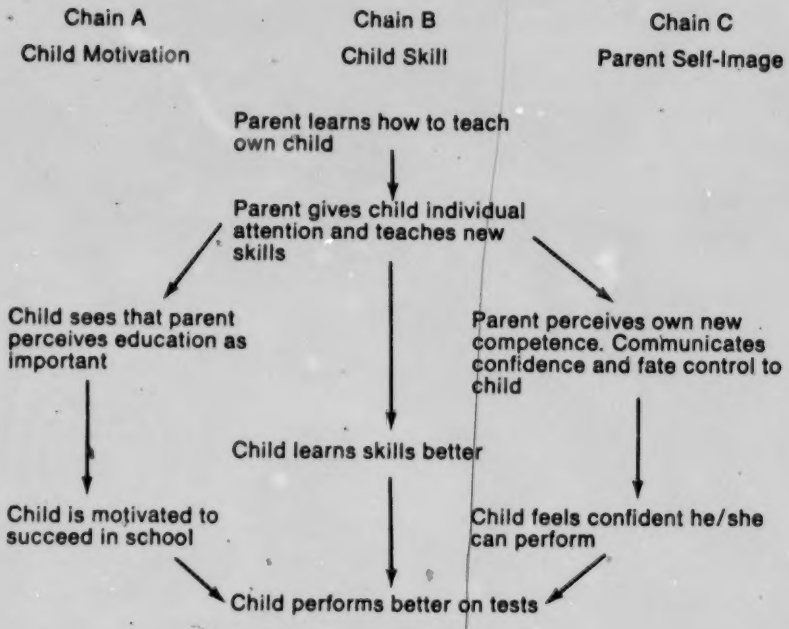

Chain A
Child Motivation
Chain B
Child Skill
Chain C
Parent Self-Image
Parent learns how to teach own child
Parent gives child individual attention and teaches new skills
Child sees that parent perceives education as important
Parent perceives own new competence. Communicates confidence and fate control to child
Child learns skills better
Child is motivated to succeed in school
Child feels confident he/she can perform
Child performs better on tests

Figure 1. Parents as Learners and as Tutors of Their Own Children

The involvement of parents in the education of their own children means building a program as it should be built, from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. It creates a foundation of support and commitment for other kinds of involvement efforts such as those envisioned in Gordon's "School Impact" and "Community Impact" models.[8] It may also obviate the need for many other kinds of public relations efforts as families begin to understand what is really involved in the education of children.

The parent-as-tutor model can be seen graphically in the "chains" described by Mimi Stearns. A "chain" of events is hypothesized beginning with involvement and leading to impact on student achievement. Stearns makes the following comments about the "chains":

> Describing the chains of events helps to clarify several fundamental issues and permits examination of specific linkages between parent involvement and child performance in school. Since the evidence currently available from the

[8] See Gordon, pp. 6-7, in this volume.

literature is equivocal, knowledge about specific links in the chain will have to be developed; such knowledge is probably the only way to explain why a given program of parent involvement may be successful while another program, which at least superficially resembles the first, has very different impacts. In addition, these descriptions permit us to look for evidence from additional sources such as the psychological literature of child development and small group theory. These chains, of course, do not take into account all the possibilities, and . . . extensive research is still needed to confirm or challenge these sets of hypotheses.[9]

The effects of the parent as tutor model are:

1. Increased motivation of the child
2. Increased skills of the child
3. Improved self-image of the parent.

Stearns pictorially describes the chaining as shown in Figure 1.

The parent-as-tutor model does, however, pose the challenge of finding a low-cost, effective delivery system. Gordon's own pioneering work at the preschool level involved the use of home visitors. While this approach is demonstrably effective, it is costly. This cost argues against its replication on a wide-scale basis, particularly when the schools are under today's budgetary pressures.

Translating Theory into Action

The work of the Home and School Institute has been devoted in large part to developing a parent-as-tutor strategy which can be utilized on a cost-effective basis with school-age children.

Basically, HSI has built programs based on assuming family strengths, not deficits. This nondeficit approach magnifies and builds on the strengths inherent in the family. It marshals available family resources and abilities to improve children's academic skills. This in turn increases self-esteem of family members and helps parents feel more secure in their parenting roles.

A deficit view of the family has served as a basis for a number of compensatory educational models. In Safran's analysis of the models outlined by Hess, it is assumed the low-income child has had fewer meaningful experiences than the middle-class child.[10] Thus, the child's readiness for public school is diminished. A programmatic implication which

[9] Mimi Stearns and others. *Parent Involvement in Compensatory Education Programs.* Menlo Park, Calif.: Stanford Research Institute, August 1973. pp. 29-49, as quoted by Daniel Safran. "Evaluating Parent Involvement." Oakland, Calif.: Center for Study of Parent Involvement, January 1974. pp. 7, 9.

[10] Safran, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

grew out of this belief is that remediation can be applied which will assist the child in "catching up" to middle-class counterparts. Education for parents is visualized as filling in knowledge gaps. The experience to date suggests that compensatory programs built on this deficit view have not fulfilled original expectations.

The authors of a recent review of compensatory education efforts state:

> The cultural deprivation approach suggested that, because of limited life experience in the home, and a disintegrating family that speaks an inadequate language and lives in a poor community, the impoverished person is not able to achieve in school and ultimately cannot contribute to society. Children of the poor simply fall victim to the same conditions and sustain the cycle of poverty. In retrospect, it now seems that social scientists were naive to expect massive educational intervention to be a major force in interrupting the poverty cycle. But many federally sponsored programs were based on this expectation. From the vantage point of the late 1970's a more pragmatic view of compensatory education may be possible.[11]

In contrast, the HSI nondeficit approach makes the following assumptions:

1. All children have had meaningful experiences. However, the disadvantaged child's experiences have been different and fewer in number in contributing to preparation for success in school.

2. Home environments, no matter how poor, are a citadel of care and concern for children.

3. All parents intrinsically possess the abilities to help their child succeed in school.

4. Family concern can be readily translated into practical support for children and for schools. Professionals need only to provide the materials and support to enable parents to become both more active and skilled participants in their child's education.

5. Schools should start with what the family has instead of worrying about what it doesn't have.

6. Schools, no matter how understaffed or equipped, have the capabilities of reaching out and effecting parent involvement by using easy, inexpensive materials, without waiting for what probably won't come: organizational change or massive government funding.

The nondeficit approach constructs a mutually reinforcing home-school system. Families are assisted to:

[11] Karen Hill-Scott and J. Eugene Grigsby. "Some Policy Recommendations for Compensatory Education." *Phi Delta Kappan* 60(6): 443-46; February 1979.

1. Use strategies at home to supplement the school's work. The HSI parent involvement model is built on the basic premise of separate but complementary roles for parent and teacher.

2. Understand that accountability for a child's education can be shared, between school and home. Parents are helped in their role as key people in the student's learning process.

The parent is the most important teacher a child will ever have. Before a child can perform confidently within the classroom, he or she must have many positive and varied experiences with the family. If the primary supportive force in the child's life, the family, has respect for and confidence in his or her ability, the child will have self-respect and self-confidence.[12]

The parent-as-tutor model provides social reinforcement to the family in the form of increased attention both to the parent from the school and from the parents to the child.

Jesse Jackson's PUSH for Excellence program has endeavored to raise the self-esteem of minority students by promoting the positive image that success is within their grasp. As a practical result, thousands of parents and children have signed agreements with schools promising to make sure that their children do their homework—with the television off. This has focused attention on one strategy parents can use to assist the schools. But, PUSH asks parents to play a rather limited role; parents are able to play a far more active role, building on and going beyond the school to enhance their children's interests and achievement. Clearly, additional involvement strategies need to be developed within a programmatic structure.

One of the strategies we at the Home and School Institute have developed is called "Home Learning Recipes." The recipes are specific, practical, no-cost activities for learning at home. Their goal is to build family interaction and children's academic achievement without duplicating the work of the school.

Since 1965, when the HSI parent programs began, Home Learning Recipes have been prepared and tested in homes with children ranging from kindergarten through the secondary grades. The recipe format outlines on one page, at a glance, activity objectives, evaluation, and adaptations, in easy to read, easy to do activities. The difference between HSI Home Learning and typical schoolwork is that HSI activities are designed

[12] William W. Purkey. *Self-Concept and School Achievement*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970. p. 2.

to use the resources of the home and the community. They are not typical schoolwork, even though they concentrate on the basic 3R skills.

Research conducted by one of the authors was the first major test of "Home Learning Recipes." Four classes of first grade children from both inner-city and suburban schools were given these home-based activities designed to supplement but not duplicate schoolwork in the basic skills areas. The children carrying these single sheets of paper home did the activities with their parents. The recipes used simple everyday household items. After a series of eight bi-weekly recipe treatments, the children's reading levels were improved at a statistically significant level.[13]

The basic HSI recipe approach has been replicated and adapted for use in a number of settings. In *Project HELP* in Benton Harbor, Michigan, the recipes model was used in a citywide Title I program for first graders. A cost effectiveness study indicated that gains per pupil were achieved for $4.83 per child, compared with "pull out" special class instructional costs of $563 per child per year.[14] In *Project AHEAD* (Accelerating Home Education and Development) in Los Angeles under the sponsorship of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference West, CETA workers are being trained successfully to help families, most of whom are black or Hispanic, to teach their children at home using the recipe approach.[15]

In "Families Learning Together," funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, recipes are being designed and field-tested which simultaneously provide parents with information in areas such as health and safety, consumer education, and family relationships while the parents in turn work with their children in reading and mathematics.[16]

The "Home Learning Recipe" approach is a double-tiered, impact model melding the child's academic achievement, parents' and child's feelings of self-esteem, and a modeling of parent behavior supporting the value of education. Basically, all of these programs combine the parent-as-tutor model with the nondeficit approach.

Data from these projects thus far indicate that additional benefits accompany a nondeficit approach to the parent-as-tutor model. Beyond those identified by Stearns, the following effects can also be expected:

[13] Dorothy Rich. "The Relationship of the Home Learning Lab Technique to First Grade Student Achievement." Doctoral dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., 1976.

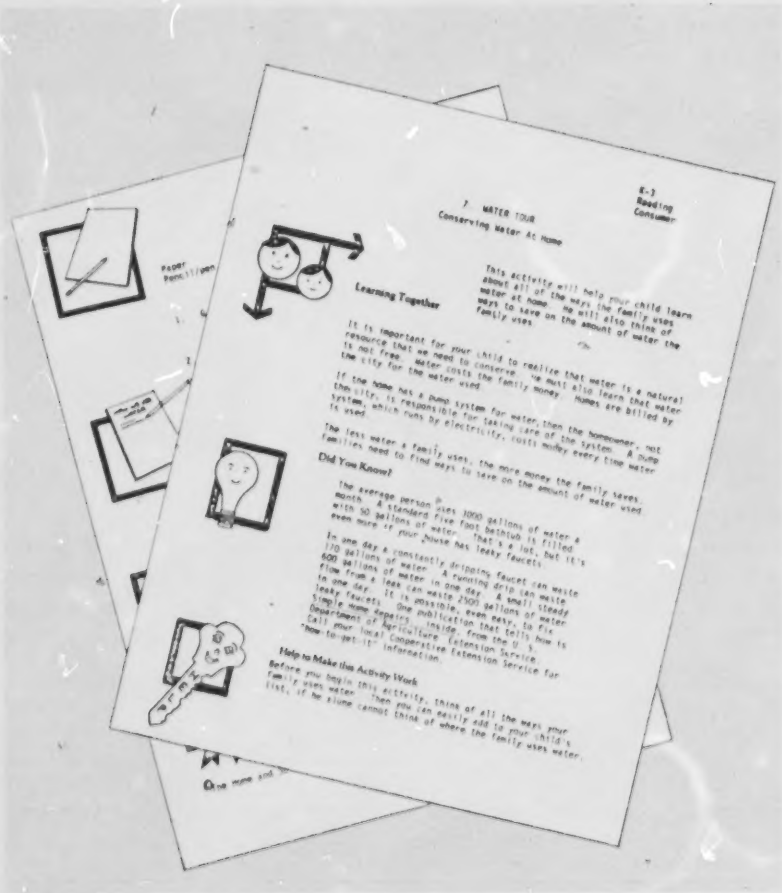
[14] Gladys E. Burks. "An Analysis of the Cost-Effectiveness of Title I Pull-Out Instruction in the Benton Harbor Area Schools." Benton Harbor, Michigan, Schools, May 1978.

[15] Bernard Plaskett. *AHEAD Report*. Los Angeles: Southern Christian Leadership Conference/West, September 1978.

[16] Home and School Institute. *Families Learning Together*. Washington, D.C.: HSI, 1978-79.

Increased motivational skills of parents to work with their child
Increased parenting skills and understanding of the school's role
Increased interaction between parent and child.

Over the years, HSI has developed a bank of recipes in the basic skills areas so that it is possible to choose among a variety of activities to fit the needs and interests of a particular child or group of children without extensive teacher involvement in the design of the materials. The approach is self-teaching and perpetuating in that it is relatively easy, once the basic technique is mastered, for teachers and parents to continue to create recipes and learning activities on their own. The approach can


E-3
Reading
Consumer

7. WATER TOUR
Conserving Water At Home

Learning Together

This activity will help your child learn about all of the ways the family uses water at home. He will also think of ways to save on the amount of water the family uses.

It is important for your child to realize that water is a natural resource that we need to conserve. He must also learn that water is not free. Water costs the family money. Homes are billed by the city for the water used.

If the home has a pump system for water then the homeowner, not the city, is responsible for taking care of the system. A pump system, which runs by electricity, costs money every time water is used.

The less water a family uses, the more money the family saves. Families need to find ways to save on the amount of water used.

Did You Know?

The average person in the U.S. uses 1000 gallons of water a month. A standard five foot bathtub is filled with 50 gallons of water. That's a lot, but it's even more if your house has leaky faucets.

In one day a constantly dripping faucet can waste 120 gallons of water. A running drip can waste 600 gallons of water. A small steady flow from a leak can waste 2500 gallons of water in one day. It is possible, even easy, to fix leaky faucets. One publication from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, available for a single home repairs, inside, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service for "how-to-get-it" information. Call your local Cooperative Extension Service for

Help to Make this Activity Work

Before you begin this activity, think of all the ways your family uses water. Then you can easily add to your child's list, if he alone cannot think of where the family uses water.

function on an individualized diagnostic-prescriptive level with the selection and/or design of recipes to meet the particular developmental or remedial needs of each child. Recipes have been used successfully with bilingual and also with handicapped populations. Perhaps most important is the finding that families do these activities with their children, voluntarily and delightedly, pleased with themselves as teachers and pleased with their children as learners.

Building an Effective Program

The school is *the* social institution that has contact with students over many years. This fact alone gives schools both the opportunity and the responsibility to reach out to the student and the family beyond the classroom walls.

In a study of Atlanta's attempt to implement *A Plan for Improvement*, Whitaker observes that "School personnel must assume initiative for developing a working partnership between community and school."[17]

This is not easy. But, beginning steps need to and can be taken. To help educators more clearly define and assume this commitment, we have identified the general elements or characteristics of successful school-family programs.

The following seven characteristics can serve as criteria for developing any school system's program:

1. Parent participation is most widespread and sustained when parents view their participation as *directly* linked to the achievement of their children. Developing and maintaining a high level of parent participation is a problem for many programs. An important, intrinsic reward and reinforcement for parents is the success experienced by their own children.

2. Parent/community involvement programs need to include the opportunity for families to supplement and reinforce the development of academic skills with work in the home. Home involvement also offers the possibility of participation to people who cannot attend in-school meetings.

3. Involvement programs should provide for various modes of participation. There is a particular need to reach out to parents with alternative participatory modes, in addition to existing advisory councils and

[17] Barbara Ingram Whitaker. "Citizen Participation in Educational Decision Making in an Urban School District as Perceived by Parents and Administrators." Doctoral dissertation, Georgia State University, 1977.

volunteer programs. This is especially needed by single parents and families with both parents working.

4. Involvement opportunities need to exist at *all* levels of schooling. Though research and school-community program development thus far have centered on the early childhood years, continuing support and reinforcement are needed as the child moves through school. A particular need for programs exists in the middle and junior high adolescent years.

5. The impetus for parent/community involvement so far appears to emerge from federally funded and other special programs of a compensatory nature. Opportunities and resources for these target populations are often greater than those available to parents of the community in general. Strategies that involve the whole community ensure broader support for an integration of these special programs into the total school procedures.

6. Parent/community involvement programs are more effective if active support and cooperation is gained from school boards, community agencies, and professional organizations.

7. Parent-community involvement needs to be viewed as a legitimate activity of the schools and as an *integral* part of its delivery of services, not an add-on. *Reaching the family is as important as reaching the child.*[18]

In order to build programs to meet these criteria, each part of the educational network must perform certain essential roles. The authors have compiled a listing of the major tasks that need to be carried out to do the job. These are identified by the roles in the educational hierarchy.

What Can a State Department of Education Do?

State departments are in an excellent position to help school districts begin to mobilize parent and community support and resources. Here are some ways:

• Assist in reorientation of thinking about the importance of parent-community involvement in the total educational process.

Help school districts delineate goals and commit resources of time, money, and people to implement and evaluate home/school programs in a systematic and meaningful way.

• Identify and support school-family involvement as an integral part of instructional services.

Encourage local educational agencies to develop a clearly defined

[18] Home and School Institute. *Survey of Home/School/Community Programs, op. cit.*

philosophy of the home/school educational partnership which can serve as the basis for the development of specific policies, guidelines, and practices.

• Advise LEA's about program operation encompassing research, development, dissemination, and technical assistance.

Highlight programs and practices for statewide attention. Provide mechanisms for sharing home/school partnership programs at statewide and regional meetings.

Build outreach from schools to community agencies by preparing and distributing a handbook to each LEA detailing the services available to families through community agencies.

Establish an information bank of resources, promising program practices and approaches as a resource for local educational agencies.

Serve as a clearinghouse to promote the increased sharing of information among LEA's and community agencies within the state. It was found in the HSI/State of Maryland survey that community agencies offer a broad network of services to families which are not yet being utilized by the schools.

What Can Local School Boards and School Superintendents Do?

• Build awareness of and provide training to board members and personnel, as needed, for school-family involvement: provide leadership techniques and strategies for developing materials, practices, and programs.

Focus attention on the role of the superintendent's staff to plan and coordinate the home/school programs: one way to do this is to fund one position with this specific responsibility.

Examine successful home/school practices within federally funded programs to be replicated on a cost effective basis within other schools in the LEA.

• Assist school personnel in accepting and using all and any additional home and community resources to supplement the school's role.

Help to maintain close working relations between citizens and school officials in the development of school policies, goals, priorities, and programs.

Institute selection processes for advisory councils to assure wider community participation.

Establish a hierarchy of Citizens' Advisory Councils beginning at the local school level and proceeding to the district level with clearly defined tasks and responsibilities.

Develop and encourage additional modes of family/community participation beyond the advisory council.

Utilize advisory councils through demonstration and training to promote the involvement of parents in the education of their own children.

What Can Principals Do?

Raise consciousness about the home and community as the key to student achievement: publicize and support ideas, materials, and strategies that promote this belief.

Learn about and replicate promising practices of other schools within one's own school.

Adapt successful program practices from the preschool and elementary levels to the needs of older students and their families.

Set up a functional design for operating a parent advisory council at the school: combine specific tasks and advisory functions as a focus for positive parental efforts.

Project for parents a realistic picture of what schools can accomplish.

What Can Teachers Do?

Recognize that all parents are a significant force in their child's education. Search for ways to involve parents as educational partners.

Use the resources of the home for materials, ideas, and as resources for different subject areas.

Teach parents how they can help their children at home: provide home learning tips on how to supplement the work of the school.

Utilize effectively the contribution of parents' skills, insights, talents, and concerns to the educational process.

Show parents in a variety of ways that you care for them and their child: Inform parents of what's happening at school on a regular basis; offer a variety of school-parent programs and materials designed to build the home/school/community educational partnership. Include special events and meetings with a teaching purpose. Schedule some programs away from the school setting. Include ways to reach working parents and single parents. Set up as many father-oriented events as possible.

Encourage parents to visit the school, to confer on a regular basis, and to use the school as a source for help and referral to community agencies.

Leadership for Change

Working on a partnership basis with the home is more difficult today than it might have been a few years ago. Existing patterns of neighborhood schools have changed. Reaching out to parents is not always a down-the-block contact. It's often a matter of many miles. Conferences

are harder to set up. Other ways will have to be employed to reach, inform, and receive advice from parents in addition to the traditional face-to-face meeting.

Parents have needs that schools will have to meet. After years of being told that they don't know "the right way" to teach, parents may need to have their confidence restored. Schools have to convince parents to trust themselves and once again regard themselves as their child's primary and ongoing teachers.

The caring, the improved education, and the increased leisure time of parents offer great potential for building a home-school educational partnership. A growing number of parents want to know how they can best help their children educationally.

Reaching out to those parents who are ready to help will make the schools' work easier, not harder. It's not doubling the burden of the school's job; it's lessening it by sharing accountability with the people identified by research as those able to make significant educational impact. The healthy skepticism and caring now shown by a growing number of parents offer hope for school personnel today. Not even the best school can do the job alone.

Educators seeking substantive family involvement in education need to be prepared to exert leadership—with staff and with parents. Working with families requires certain basic attitudes, skills, and behaviors.

Instead of starting with "what do we have to fix?," educators need to start with "what can we build on?" The professional orientation changes from focusing on the family's deficits to building on the family's strengths.

Educators will have to learn to work effectively with adults which may require new skills. Teachers need to know and be able to impart to parents an overview of the research that supports the parent-as-teacher approach. Teachers need skills as leaders and as problem solvers. More specifically, they may need help in running better conferences and meetings and teachers need to know how to develop and use materials for outreach to the home. The focus is not just on the child but on the family as new "home-style" teachers of the child.

Teachers need to be able to build partnerships with the home, in an orderly, non-crisis fashion. The emphasis must be on prevention before issues become problems. The emphasis must be on children's abilities, before they become disabilities. The emphasis must be on what can be done with what is available now!

Programs can begin with one parent, one teacher, one school, one community. The goal is clearly defined. The strategies can be directly charted. Let us begin. Let us continue.

The Partnership with Title I Parents

Phyllis J. Hobson

An educator with successful experience administering programs for parents of children in compensatory education explains the organization of the District of Columbia Title I Parental Involvement Program and lists five essentials for parental involvement.

For too long we school people have been assuming full responsibility for the academic achievement of children. Now, encouraging outcomes of parent involvement in the Title I Program of the District of Columbia Public Schools demonstrate that it is time we shared this educational responsibility with parents, our children's first teachers.

Research conclusions, evaluation findings, and personal experience support the concept of parent involvement. The influence of parents on their children's attitudes and values is documented in the literature and demonstrated through students' school adjustment. A study I conducted revealed that Title I students demonstrated significantly higher achievement when parents became directly involved in the educational program of their children.[1] Other evaluation findings indicated that,

> The level of "family support" registers a pervasive impact on a broad range of student outcomes, including achievement and classroom behavior. . . . It seems likely that family support is the most potent out-of-school contribution to students' performance and to the extent to which the Title I Program can effect a positive increase in this variable, the child should benefit.[2]

[1] Phyllis J. Hobson. *Structured Parental Involvement: An Analysis of a Title I Summer Parent Guided AT-HOME Project.* Doctoral dissertation, George Washington University, 1976. pp. 80-81.

[2] IBEX, Incorporated, and Roy Littlejohn Associates, Inc. "Evaluation of ESEA Title I Program of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia, 1974-75 Final Evaluation Report." Washington, D.C., 1976. p. 7.

The Parental Involvement Component provides an organized way to involve parents in all facets of the Title I Program, from planning to evaluation. The program design (Figure 1) is diversified in scope for broad impact.

Component	Function
1. Parent Advisory Councils	Decision making
2. Parent-Partner Volunteer Corps	Classroom support
3. Parent Awareness Conference	Program dissemination
4. Parent Education Traineeship	Structured staff development
5. TOPPS Chorus	Creative expression
6. Home Activities	Skill reinforcement

Figure 1. Design of the District of Columbia Parental Involvement Program

Advisors/Decision Makers

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is the official parent organization of the Title I Program. The PAC is involved in review and recommendation of the proposal/application for the entire program.

School Councils operate at each of the 98 Title I schools. They hold monthly meetings to determine program priorities and to make recommendations to Intermediate Councils. There are 71 elementary, 20 secondary, and 7 private school councils.

Intermediate Councils are organized within six regions. These councils meet every six weeks to receive and act upon recommendations from schools.

The District Council is composed of 196 delegates and alternates from 98 schools. It meets monthly to serve as the final LEA review body for Title I.

Volunteers

Federal guidelines encourage the participation of parent volunteers in Title I projects. Volunteers, whom we call "Parent-Partners," are involved in the educational programs of their children by assisting teachers in both public and private elementary and secondary schools. Parent-Partners receive preservice and ongoing inservice training intended to help them gain skills to use at home as well as in the school.

School classroom activities performed by the volunteers include tutoring pupils; assisting teachers in making games; showing filmstrips; checking papers and assisting in homework centers; and reading to

individual pupils or groups of pupils. Volunteers also assist teachers during art or music class activities, plan and arrange bulletin boards, assist teachers with playground activities, assist in the lunchroom during lunch period, assist on field trips, and assist pupils in the library.

The Parent Education Traineeship

The Parent Education Traineeship provides a framework for parent training. The basic offerings are: (a) leadership training for PAC, (b) preservice/inservice training for Parent-Partners, (c) parent-to-parent training, (d) the TOPPS Chorus, and (e) the Annual Parent Awareness Conference.

Leadership Training for PAC. Leadership training is conducted for Parent Advisory Council members and officers. The training sessions are designed to help parent councils carry out their functions. Leadership training sessions cover: (a) the needs of educationally deprived children, (b) federal guidelines and regulations, (c) roles and organization of parent councils, (d) the application process, (e) current Title I programs and activities carried out locally and in other school districts, (f) evaluation techniques and findings, (g) parliamentary procedures, (h) human relations, and (i) development of a PAC manual. Resource persons include both parents and professional staff.

Preservice/Inservice Training for Parent-Partners. The preservice and inservice training for Parent-Partners (school volunteers) is practical in nature and concept. Practical experiences in basic reading, language, and mathematics instructional skills are offered during the summer program and comprise the major inservice strategy. Orientation for Parent-Partners is also conducted in September, prior to their assignment to schools in October.

The focus of inservice training is team training. Schools pair Parent-Partners with classroom or laboratory teachers and these teams attend training sessions together.

Parent-to-Parent Training. The skills of experienced parents are used in the parent-to-parent training program. A professional consultant serves as team-leader to conduct a specialized four-week training cycle with 20 experienced parents who meet the criteria for parent-trainers. These parent-trainers then help train other parents in one of two areas: Home Learning, or extension of the Parent-Partner (volunteer) training.

The TOPPS Chorus. The TOPPS Chorus (Title One Parent-Partners Chorus) is an organized group for involving parents in music education, creative expression, and personal development. Parent members of the TOPPS Chorus receive music education experiences and increase their

repertoire of children's music for use with their own children. Entering its seventh year as a parental involvement organization, the chorus performs at many school and community programs.

Annual Parent Awareness Conference. The Annual Parent Awareness Conference is the culminating feature and teaching/learning experience of the Parent Education Traineeship. The conference is developed by parents and sponsored by the PAC as a two-day training institute. It includes parent exhibits, demonstrations, workshops, seminars, the dissemination of parent information and materials, and award recognition. The major purpose of the conference is to foster greater awareness by Title I parents, the school, and the community of the impact of parental involvement on student achievement.

The Parent Awareness Conference provides participants with exposure to new programs and practices. It provides an opportunity to review and share educational experiences which parents have found effective in meeting the needs of Title I children.

I hope that what I have described will be seen as suggestions rather than prescriptions. School systems seeking to encourage and expand parent involvement in Title I or other compensatory education programs will need to try out, modify, and pass along those ideas that are helpful for their own special purposes. Procedures and practices, however, are not the chief concern. The urgent message is that *parents are important* to a child's success in school.

Five Essentials of Parent Involvement

Experience has shown that there are five factors that contribute to success of parent involvement in Title I and other compensatory programs.

- First, explore with parents what they want schools to accomplish. You are likely to discover that parents and school people make natural partners because they share a common goal: providing quality educational opportunities for children. I have never met a parent who did not want the best for his or her children.

- Second, devise opportunities for parents to get involved that they see as practical and meaningful. Successful experiences have great holding power.

- Third, keep reaching out to parents with warmth and sensitivity. Be careful of vocabulary; for example, avoid use of terms such as "disadvantaged," "low income," and "culturally deprived." Seek to eliminate

barriers of race, religion, or economic condition and stereotyped preconceptions are likely to disappear.

We educators sometimes magnify what we perceive as hostility and mistrust from parents. I believe that the quality of parent involvement in urban schools is not very different from that in suburban schools, and that most parents want to and will cooperate with the people at their child's school.

- Fourth, develop an on-going training program in which parents and staff are both teachers and learners. The satisfaction gained from the team approach seems to motivate learning and increase skills. Of course, the quality of human relationships in teaching and learning experiences is paramount because rules, regulations, and techniques alone rarely work to change behavior at deeper levels.

- Fifth, acknowledge that sharing power with parents is not abdication of one's professional leadership role. On the contrary, it provides an opportunity to understand parents' interests and goals and to learn ways to help achieve them. If we avoid perpetuating the traditional practice of formulating decisions from the top, we are less likely to impose our beliefs on others, or to make decisions for others.

Moreover, well informed parents contribute to wiser decisions. Parents who are involved in decision making grow in their ability to shape policy and to measure the effectiveness of educational programs. They also come to respect the views of educators and value their expertise in matters where it counts.

These comments may provide a general framework, but no ready made plan will fit every situation. The essence of success in working with parents—no matter where they live or what their circumstances—is a spirit of cooperation with the shared purpose of meeting children's needs.

The Changing Role of Parent Groups in Educational Decision Making

Lois S. Steinberg

Studies conducted before 1970 usually found that parents and other citizens had little influence on local school policy. In this review of recent literature, Lois Steinberg discusses several new forms of participation and considers evidence of their potential effectiveness.

Since 1974 the Institute for Responsive Education has conducted a series of studies to identify the new forms for parent/citizen participation in local school districts and to assess their impact on education policies and programs. Data were collected from a variety of sources: reviews of published evaluations; field interviews with school officials, parents, and members of community organizations in 11 urban centers; workshops attended by members of 150 school councils; a national survey of state education departments; and an analysis of state and federal court decisions which legitimated parent or citizen participation.

There are at least seven developments that have either mandated or supported parent/citizen influence in educational policy and program implementation:

School decentralization
Federally-mandated parent advisory councils
Parent/citizen councils mandated by state or local school officials
Child advocacy organizations
Citizen advisory councils mandated by court-ordered desegregation plans
Court decisions
Changes in the national PTA and some local PTA's.

The patterns of participation associated with these developments

suggest that the government mandated councils are not effective mediating structures for parents to represent their interests to school boards. They have provided few opportunities for parents to influence local educational policies or programs. However, during the same time that government mandated councils have been initiated, a number of independent organizations have emerged to represent parent interests at the national, state, and local levels. This section will summarize the major findings of the limited research on these developments.

School decentralization. The published research on school decentralization has focused on the factors contributing to the development of demands for participation and variations in response in different cities, or evaluations of the results. Proponents of decentralization were able to achieve political restructuring—the creation of elected community school boards—in only two cities, New York and Detroit. In other cities, community demands for participation were resolved by some form of administrative decentralization which included the creation of school-based advisory councils.

Evaluations of the results of both political and administrative decentralization indicate that few powers were transferred to the community school boards or advisory councils. In New York City, for example, central board and administrative control over decisions related to budget, curriculum, and personnel was left virtually intact.[1] While the reform did serve to increase parent participation, in most districts school boards were dominated by the representatives of such established groups as political parties, churches, and teacher unions.

Peterson[2] speculated that the goal of decentralization, from the perspective of policymakers, was social cohesion rather than social change, to be achieved by containing conflict at the local level and facilitating the hiring of more minority personnel. The central board was, in general, insulated from community groups. However, the limitations of the powers granted to the boards activated some districts to pursue change efforts through city-level groups and the court.[3] For example, the employment of minority personnel resulted from a court action undertaken by the NAACP.[4]

[1] Marilyn Gittell and others. *School Boards and School Policy: An Evaluation of Decentralization in New York City.* New York: Praeger, 1973.

[2] Paul E. Peterson. "Afterword: The Politics of School Decentralization." *Education and Urban Society* 7: 464-79; August 1975.

[3] Michael A. Rebell. "New York's School Decentralization Law: Two and a Half Years Later." *Journal of Law and Education* 2: 1-39; January 1973.

[4] Gittell and others, *op. cit.*

Government-mandated councils. These councils include those mandating parent/citizen advisory councils to participate in the planning and implementation of federally-funded programs and those based on state and local initiatives which require citizen participation at either the local school or district level.

An Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) study estimates that the combined non-professional membership in these councils is approximately 1,200,000.[5] A majority—around 900,000—are participants in Title I Parent Advisory Councils (PACs). About 200,000 are participating in Head Start, Follow Through, and other federally-funded programs. State and local mandated groups account for only a fraction of the total (75,000).

The federally-funded programs. The goals of these participatory programs are similar to those of the Community Action Programs (CAPs) initiated with the 1960's War on Poverty:

1. To make the services delivered by government institutions more responsive to client needs
2. To integrate the bottom segments of the population into the national society.

While the evidence indicates that these federal compensatory programs have contributed to a "clear if modest redistribution of educational resources benefiting the poor, non-English speaking, and physically or mentally handicapped children," several problems have emerged in relation to the participation of representatives of the target groups in these programs. These problems are also similar to those uncovered by the research on the CAPs[6]:

The goals of the participatory programs were ambiguous

There were no clear-cut guidelines for selecting target group representatives

There were no provisions or rules to regulate the scope of participation.

It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that the implementation of these programs varies. In some districts the "same officials and participants" were involved in several programs with different "rules, regula-

[5] Don Davies and others. *Sharing the Power?* Boston: Institute for Responsive Education, 1977.

[6] Lois S. Steinberg. *Social Science Theory and Research on Participation and Voluntary Associations: A Bibliographic Essay.* Boston: Institute for Responsive Education, 1977. p. 103.

tions, purposes, and styles of participation." There are also variations in the monitoring and enforcement of program requirements.[7]

In some districts, parents and school administrators have been able to use the councils to develop effective relationships, but this has not been the case in most Title I programs. According to the data analyzed by IRE:

> . . . while Title I participatory mechanisms . . . have the potential for high levels of impact—both in the shaping of policy and in the delivery of services to the schools—only rarely do they achieve this potential. This is due, in large measure, to the combination of an unclear mandate and a lack of resources.[8]

The Title I PACs are relatively "closed systems" which focus parent and staff exclusively on Title I issues, thus isolating them from other school activities.[9] Few resources have been provided to the councils, such as technical assistance, staff to coordinate their activities or collect information, or state or local administrators to monitor and enforce program guidelines. Given the ambiguity of the guidelines, the latter's task is admittedly difficult.

Initially, the Title I guidelines did not mandate parent participation. In 1971 the guidelines were amended to require "districtwide parent councils—with parents constituting more than a simple majority—to participate in the planning, development, operation, and evaluation of the projects.[10] A 1974 amendment required both districtwide and local school PACs. Regulations were further revised in 1976, requiring that a majority of members be parents of children participating in the program. Furthermore, members are to be selected by parents.

Efforts to "empower" Title I PACs have been undertaken by three independent organizations and all have been partially funded by the Carnegie Corporation. The activities of these groups reflect the need to create formal linkage between local school PACs at the district, regional, and national levels and to provide information and technical assistance to parents at the local level.

The Coalition of Title I Parents, with the support of other groups, persuaded congress to mandate district and school site parent councils. This group was started in 1973 and sponsors national conferences for Title I PAC members. The endorsement of these conferences by the chief

[7] Don Davies. "Federal Impact." In: Don Davies and others. *Federal and State Impact on Citizen Participation in the Schools.* Boston: Institute for Responsive Education, 1978. p. 3.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Title I administrator in the Office of Education enables local PAC members to use Title I funds to attend the conferences. The coalition has developed an organizational structure which includes "10 regions coinciding with the HEW regions." It disseminates information and provides technical assistance to local PACs.[11] The Federal Education Project "both monitors and provides information for the administration of Title I in the Office of Education and in the HEW regional offices." This project also provides training and assistance to local Title I PACs and publishes a newsletter. The American Friends Service Committee's Southeast Education Project operates a training and assistance program in 30 school districts in six southeastern states.[12]

State and local mandated councils. The IRE study defined school councils as "school-based groups within school buildings, areas, or citywide groups" mandated by state or local school initiatives. Here, too, there has been little impact.

> . . . school councils are not now, by and large, effective vehicles for citizens to affect educational policies and decisions. But they are an unrealized potential to become mechanisms for producing power sharing and partnership between citizens and educators.[13]

Policymakers who intended that the councils provide a means to develop participatory democracy at the grassroots level were reported to be disappointed with the results. Parents and citizens who served on the councils "were even more frustrated."[14]

Most of these councils operate at the school building rather than the districtwide level, but no statistics have been collected on membership. The councils tend to be dominated by educational professionals—mainly principals—who are "generally concerned about minimizing participation in areas traditionally considered subject to management prerogatives."[15] A major portion of the members' time is spent on organizational rather than school related issues and they lack the resources (effective leadership, training workshops, independent sources of information) that might enable them to assume more responsibility in local school and district decisions. Frustration leads to high turnover in membership, so the councils are not stable bodies.

In general, school boards do not appear to see councils as very high

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
[13] Davies and others, *Sharing the Power?*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

priorities. The initiative for setting them up has been taken by the professional educators. School boards seldom relate directly with council members, thus most of their information on council activities is obtained from administrators.[16] School board members frequently expressed fears that the councils would encroach on board responsibilities or be used by citizens to develop a base for future school board candidacy.

Child advocacy groups. Child advocacy groups are citizen-run organizations which use a variety of strategies to establish and protect the rights of children served by public institutions. Some of the groups were initiated to promote children's rights in several institutions (the juvenile justice system, health care), including their educational rights. Others are established organizations which had worked on educational issues and have added an advocacy function.[17]

The activities of these organizations tend to take two forms: individual case advocacy and class advocacy. The former involves assistance to individuals—such as direct intervention on behalf of the child in problems related to a local institution, counseling, referrals to other agencies, and legal assistance. Class advocacy "seeks remedies to the inadequacies of the social and education system for groups of children."[18]

Between the late 1960's and the present a number of public interest law firms, as well as advocacy groups, have been instrumental in achieving major court decisions and federal legislation affecting the rights of students and the delivery of educational services at the local school district level.[19]

Besides school integration,[20] in the field of education, advocacy groups have been responsible for decisions which have required local school districts to enforce existing statutes affecting student rights and to provide services to mentally retarded children and special programs for non-English speaking children and others.

In most cases the decisions have involved extensive documentation of the failure of local school districts to comply with federal laws, to provide appropriate services for children with special needs, and in some

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 50-55.

[17] Don Davies and others. *Shifting Patterns of Participation.* Boston: Institute for Responsive Education, 1978. Chapter 4. (Unpublished draft.)

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] John C. Hogan. "Law, Society, and the Schools." In: C. W. Cordon, editor. *Uses of Sociology of Education.* National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974. See, also: Michael W. Kirst. "The Growth of Federal Influence in Education," in C. W. Gordon.

[20] Brown *v* Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954; Serrano *v* Priest, 5 Cal. 3d 584, 96 Cal. Rptr. 601, 487 P.2d 1241 (1971); Mills *v* Board of Education of the District of Columbia, 348 F.Supp. 866, 868 (D.D.C. 1972).

cases, failure to provide any services at all. This documentation also established the need for individual case advocacy.

Examples of advocacy groups operating at the national, state, and local levels are the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), Massachusetts Advocacy Center (MAC), and Advocates for Children of New York (AFC).[21]

CDF, the primary national child advocacy organization, stems from a Head Start program in Mississippi. This organization works closely with other national and local groups to monitor services provided for children by local institutions (health care, juvenile justice, foster care, day care). The Fund's strategy is to identify and document local problems and deal with them at the Washington, D.C., and branch offices.

The model for change adapted by MAC, a state level group which grew out of the Massachusetts Task Force on Children Out of School, was derived from strategies used in the *Hunger, USA* inquiry.[22] The MAC strategy involves four elements[23]:

1. Pick a problem that has specific remedies. Document the extent of the problem. Create a task force that includes professionals who will have to respond to the issues. Promote public awareness of the problem through public hearings and creative use of media.

2. Litigation. A lawsuit or threat of a lawsuit will often get administrators to change. However, this tactic should be used with caution since the results may not always serve the client's interest.

3. Legislation. Tax exempt advocacy groups cannot lobby but they can conduct research for legislatures and provide "technical assistance to other advocacy groups that are free to lobby."[24] They also comment on pending legislation.

4. Administrative negotiation. Advocates sit down with bureaucrats responsible for promulgating regulations to carry out federal and state laws and those responsible for implementing them locally. They have discovered that bureaucracies are not monolithic and many changes can be brought about by working with the insiders. This process requires mastering a good deal of technical knowledge and perseverance.

In the early part of the civil rights movement, advocates worked only for policy change. They learned that there is often a large gap between the policymakers intent and the programs implemented at the local level. Program guidelines are often unclear or inappropriate to local

[21] Don Davies and others, *Shifting Patterns of Participation, op. cit.*

[22] Larry Brown. "Hunger USA: The Public Pushes Congress." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 11: 115-26; June 1970.

[23] Peter Edelman. "The Massachusetts Task Force Reports: Advocacy for Children." *Harvard Educational Review* 43: 639-52; November 1973.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 647.

needs. From the knowledge gained through working with individual cases, advocates are able to identify problems and make recommendations for program modifications.

AFC is an example of a locality-based group providing advocacy services to parents and their children who attend public schools in New York City. AFC began as a volunteer operation, but since 1974 funds from foundations and city agencies have supported a professional staff. A majority of cases handled by this agency involve student suspensions and the placement of handicapped children. In addition to child case advocacy, AFC works with other advocacy groups at the city, state, and national level to promote system reforms.

The Changing PTA

The PTA is the major organization for the articulation of parent interests to school officials and legislators at the local, state, and federal levels. Although the role of these parent groups varies in different districts, decision-making studies have usually found that the PTA plays a supportive rather than a critical role.[25] This tendency reflects a long-standing national policy that the PTA ". . . will not interfere with the administration of the schools and should not ask to control their policies."[26]

There are several indications that the national PTA is trying to broaden the membership base and redefine the parents' role in decision making. These changes undoubtedly are a response to a decline in membership (from about 12 million in the 1960's to 6.3 million currently, the decentralization and child advocacy movements, and the unionization of teachers. An IRE report suggests that some of the parents who might previously have joined the PTA are now active in mandated councils and PTOs or POs. The latter exist in districts where parents have severed ties to the PTA, or where there is no parent organization.

One example of the effort to broaden the membership base is the 1970 merger of the National Colored Congress of Parents and Teachers and the National PTA.[27] This move has been followed by similar mergers in many states and local school districts.

[25] Paul E. Peterson. "The Politics of American Education." In: F. N. Kerlinger and J. B. Carroll, editors. *Review of Research in Education.* Vol. 2. Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock, 1974. p. 353.

[26] Institute for the Development of Educational Activities, Inc. "Toward More Effective Involvement of the Community in the Schools." Melbourne, Fla.: /I/D/E/A/, 1973.

[27] National PTA. Letter from Sandra E. Fink, Director of Public Information, August 30, 1978.

In 1972, the national PTA board dropped the non-intervention policy and announced that the group would promote an active role for parents. A handbook on "The Role of Collective Bargaining in Public Education" suggests that the organization is taking parent participation seriously. Besides alerting parents that the "scope of negotiations may expand to include most areas of educational policy and practice,"[28] it restates the new position on parent involvement in policy. Parents are advised that, "There can be no doubt that the PTA should seek to be involved in the collective bargaining process." The booklet lists a number of ways a PTA can become involved in contract negotiations and gives examples of steps taken by some state and local chapters.

Other brochures put out by the national PTA stress the difference between PTAs and PTOs. PTOs are "local" groups whereas the PTAs are affiliated with state and national PTA.[29] Thus local PTAs are provided with linkages to state and federal legislatures similar to those the Coalition of Title I parents is attempting to establish for the local PACs.

One brochure advertises "The PTA as an Advocate for Children,"[30] and cites the group's activities in relation to collective bargaining, TV violence, handicapped children, urban problems, tuition tax credits, testing, and school finance. During the 1978-79 school year, the PTA planned to sponsor a series of public hearings on urban school problems.

Are the new participatory structures adequate? The available data on the effects of the new participatory structures have indicated that they have not created, in most instances, adequate opportunities for parents to have access to decision making at either the local district or federal and state levels.

At a time when more and more of the decisions affecting the resources and educational programs provided at the local level are being made by federal and state authorities, the new participatory structures tend to channel parent participation at the local school level. Federally-funded programs direct parents' attention to specific programs rather than systemwide issues—as do the programs which reflect special needs.

By mandating parent participation in the design and implementation of federally-funded programs, the decision makers sought to ensure that the programs were responsive to the students' needs. Efforts to bring about these policy changes were undertaken by independent groups with

[28] National PTA. *The Role of Collective Bargaining in Public Education.* Chicago: PTA, 1978.

[29] National PTA. *Why PTA—Instead of PTO?* Chicago: PTA, n.d.

[30] National PTA. *The National PTA: What It Is, What It Does.* Chicago: PTA, n.d.

little parental involvement. Implementation was turned over to local school boards and administrators—the very groups who had neglected the students' educational needs in the first place. Program guidelines are ambiguous; the role of parents has not been clarified.

Few resources have been allocated to assist parent groups where local administrators and school boards are resistant to change. Results of the IRE studies suggest that the new councils may be having the same effects as school decentralization and the CAPs: fragmented participation. The fragmentation associated with government programs has been compounded in some districts where parents severed relationships with the PTA and set up new organizations.

Some of the CAP studies suggest that the programs worked best in two types of situations: (1) those that promoted limited participation and influence stressing cooperation between representatives of the poor and established groups,[31] or (2) those where minority leaders were able to pursue a political strategy (mobilizing the poor) which appeared to happen in neighborhoods where minority leadership and neighborhood organizations were already established or emerging. These patterns were related to local power structures, city size, and the size of the black population.[32]

On the whole, the neighborhood organizations mobilized with federal resources were constrained not only by the difficulty of activating and sustaining community participation, but also by the federal guidelines and inability of federal officials to change local power structures. Where federally-funded action programs were able to organize on a neighborhood basis, this led to the creation of narrow—rather than broad—constituencies and reform policies.[33]

Although there seems to be some support for the view that independent organizations (those sponsored by the private sector) are more effective mechanisms for change than dependent organizations (government sponsored), their influence is limited compared to the organized forces protecting the interests of school boards and professional educators.[34]

[31] Richard L. Cole. *Citizen Participation and the Urban Policy Process.* Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1974.

[32] Charles Brecher. *The Impact of Federal Anti-Poverty Politics.* New York: Praeger, 1973.

[33] Paul E. Peterson. "Forms of Representation: Participation of the Poor in the Community Action Program." *American Political Science Review* 64: 491-507; 1970; Douglas Yates. *Neighborhood Democracy: The Politics and Impacts of Decentralization.* Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973.

[34] Lois S. Steinberg, *op. cit.*

The educational decision-making process has become increasingly formal, specialized, and centralized. It is difficult for grassroots groups to acquire the resources needed for effective participation in the decision-making process in the present context: money, knowledge of the law, and organizational skills. Few locality-based parent/citizen groups have the expertise or money to mount lobbying efforts to influence more distant state and federal appointed or elected officials. In order to ensure that policies are implemented in their interests, parents must often put pressure on the administrators who manage the local educational bureaucracies. But these officials, as well as teachers, through their occupational associations, have far more resources than most citizen groups to maintain their vested interests if threatened by parent participation. (The National PTA maintains a satellite office in Washington, D.C., which serves to interpret the PTA's interest in legislation pertaining to education and child welfare to congress.)

Have the rules changed? Studies conducted prior to 1970 indicated that both urban and suburban school systems were relatively closed to the influence of parents and non-parents in local school policy. Most of the powers originally delegated by the states to local school boards had been taken over by professional educators. The rules governing parent participation were defined by educators and endorsed by most school boards.[35]

There were no formal procedures for parents to play a constructive role in the formulation of educational policy and such activities were prohibited by the by-laws of the very organization which had been set up to represent parent interests: the PTA. Thus, all three established channels for parent access to decision making were restricted to supportive participation. Parents and non-parents who chose to oppose administrative policies had to create ad hoc groups to pursue such efforts which were labeled by researchers as "disruptive forces." Although local school board elections offered the means to redirect a district's educational goals, the process required a long time and a lot of energy.

The data we have examined suggest that government-mandated councils have legitimated an active role for parents and were intended to restrict the professional's ability to define the parents' role. However, implementation of the new policies has usually been given to professionals enabling them to continue to define the parents' role. In addition, mandated councils, like school decentralization, created another layer between parents and the decision centers.

[35] Stephen M. David and Paul E. Peterson. *Urban Politics and Public Policy*. New York: Praeger, 1976.

A major weakness of these changes supporting parent participation is that they have been initiated at federal and state levels with little involvement of parents or administrators at the local level and rarely provide resources for implementation or monitoring.

Child advocacy groups, on the other hand, have managed to change a number of rules that affect the way school administrators define and resolve problems. They share weaknesses similar to those related to the government-mandated councils. They do not involve extensive participation of local parents or sufficient resources for implementation and monitoring. Where local administrators are resistant to parent participation, parents can turn to independent advocacy groups for assistance, but there is no data to assess the availability or adequacy of these services.

In terms of parent-school board relationships, the most significant innovation is the national PTA's endorsement of parent participation in local district policies. However, implementation of this policy is up to local parent initiative and resources.

Despite the limitations of the changes we have reviewed, it is clear that the rules governing parent participation are in the process of change. All of these forces have contributed to the legitimation of an active, rather than a passive, parent role. However, if the process is to result in any "power sharing," it will have to affect the relationships between parents and the groups that wield power. The research suggests that power varies in different types of communities and different types of educational issues. Therefore, the major task for local parents is to figure out who has the power and how to get a fair share of it.

The Rights of Parents to Determine Their Child's Curriculum

Suzanne O'Shea

Can parents keep schools from teaching their children about sex and other topics they object to? In this review of court rulings, Suzanne O'Shea analyzes the rights of parents to withdraw their children from instruction.

Parents of public school children do not always approve of the curriculum taught at their child's school. They might object to their child's exposure to certain subjects, or to language found in textbooks; or they might agree that a particular subject ought to be taught while objecting to the teaching method used.

Parental response to objectionable portions of a school's curriculum may take different forms. Parents may work within the democratic system at the appropriate level to change textbook selection methods, or to remove certain subjects from the list of required courses. As an alternative, parents may opt for the more direct response of removing their child from the objectionable portion of the curriculum.

This chapter will explore the legal basis for parental action to remove a child from certain portions of the regular school curriculum. The legality of school-initiated excusal systems will be discussed as well.

At the outset, it is helpful to classify parental action into two types based upon the reason underlying the parents' attempt to withdraw their child from specific portions of the curriculum. Objections may be based on constitutionally protected values such as freedom of religion or privacy; or they may be based on a variety of personal beliefs such as parental opinion that their child is wasting time studying one subject when another is more important.

At the turn of the century, state courts generally permitted parents to withdraw their children from certain portions of the school's program, reflecting a widely held belief that the "policy of our law has ever been

to recognize the right of a parent to determine to what extent his child is to be educated."[1] Two presumptions supported this policy. The first was that parents had at least as much knowledge of the child's "physical and mental abilities and future prospects" as the child's teacher. The second presumption was that parents have a permanent affection for their children and are, therefore, more likely to act in the best interests of the child than are teachers, who have at most a "temporary interest in the welfare of the child."[2]

Courts of this period required that the removal of the child be reasonable and that it not interfere with the education of other students. Given the courts' presumption that a parent is the best judge of the child's needs, it was not difficult to convince the court that the withdrawal was reasonable. For example, a parent was allowed to have a child excused from geography so that more time could be spent with arithmetic[3]; a parent was allowed to remove a child from a required course in domestic science because the child would have insufficient time to study music with a private instructor unless the course were dropped[4]; a parent was permitted to withdraw a child from grammar instruction because it was not taught in the same way it had been when the parent was in school[5]; and one court permitted a parent to withdraw a child from music class even though the parent refused to justify the request.[6] It is clear that the courts of this period did not think that it would be disruptive or detrimental to the education of other students to allow some students to be excused from certain instruction.[7]

[1] Trustees of Schools *v* People, 87 Ill. 303, 308 (1877).
[2] Sheibley *v* School District No. 1, 31 Neb. 552, 556, 48 N.W. 393, 395 (1891).
[3] Morrow *v* Wood, 35 Wis. 59 (1874).
[4] Kelley *v* Ferguson, 95 Neb. 63, 144 N.W. 1039 (1914).
[5] Sheibley *v* School District No. 1, 31 Neb. 552, 556, 48 N.W. 393, 395 (1891).
[6] School Board District No. 18 *v* Thompson, 24 Okla. 1, 103 P. 578 (1909).
[7] At this time, few states had compulsory education laws. In defending their position that children not be released from portions of the school's program, school officials generally argued that although the children could not be forced to attend school at all, once the child did enter school, the school officials had complete authority to control the child's education. Support for this position can be found in statutes that required certain subjects to be taught, or that gave power to school officials to develop the curriculum. These statutes might have been interpreted as giving school officials the authority to adopt rules and regulations with which parents and students had to comply in order to attend the public schools. However, the courts interpreted them as mandating only that students be given the opportunity to study certain subjects. Although it seems as if the courts could have held that since the children could not be forced to attend school at all, they could not be forced to attend any particular class, the courts generally decided the issue on a more positive parental right to determine the extent of their child's education. For a thorough discussion of this topic, from which much of the information for this portion of this chapter was gathered, see *Parents and Public School Curriculum*, 50 Southern California Law Review 871 (1977).

Fewer Cases After 1934

After 1934, until quite recently, few, if any, courts made determinations on whether a parent could remove a child from certain portions of the curriculum. One can only speculate on the reasons for this. Perhaps parents now regard educators as the better judge of their children's educational needs, and, therefore, no longer request that their children be withdrawn from certain courses. Perhaps school administrators believe that parents have a right to withdraw their children, and for that reason, make no objections to parental action to remove them.

The authority of the turn-of-the-century cases when applied to modern situations is not entirely clear. The old cases have never been overruled, yet the modern decisions rarely make mention of them. In fact, the modern courts seem to place the responsibility of determining what the student is taught upon educators, seldom mentioning any presumed parental right to determine the extent to which children are educated. For example, in 1975, a Vermont court held that a seventh grade girl must attend required physical education classes.[8] No religious or health reasons were given for the child's desire to skip the classes, she simply did not enjoy them. In denying the parent's request that his daughter be excused from physical education classes, the court characterized the action as a misguided effort to revise the curriculum to accommodate the wishes of the student and the father's educational philosophies.

A similar case was decided in 1974 in the northern district of Georgia.[9] A high school student, through his parents, wished to be exempted from taking a required ROTC course. The court found that objections to the course were based on sincere personal beliefs, but were not the result of any religious training. Therefore, there could be no finding that the course impinged on constitutional rights of freedom of religion of either the parents or the student. The ROTC course covered topics in addition to military training which the court felt were valuable, including leadership, personal hygiene, discipline, and first aid. Because of the additional subjects covered, the court would not permit the student to be excused from ROTC.

No recent case was discovered in which a court denied a parental request to withdraw a child because of the disruption it might cause in a well-ordered school system. However, in a New Jersey case,[10] the state school board was clearly concerned with the problem. In response to a

[8] Ouimette v Babbie, 405 F.Supp. 525 (D.Ver. 1975).
[9] Sapp v Renfroe, 372 F.Supp. 1193 (N.D. Ga. 1974).
[10] Valent v New Jersey State Board of Education, 114 N.J. Super. 63, 274 A.2d 832 (1971).

parent's request that his child be removed from a course called "Human Sexuality" the school board stated that "[i]t is the belief of the state board that local boards should not be required to grant such exceptions. To do otherwise would be to establish a precedent which would have far reaching impact on the efficacy of the public school system. Such a precedent could open the door for demands for exclusion, on grounds of conscience, from courses as health, physical education, biology, and even English literature."[11] The court neither approved nor disapproved of this policy, since this hearing was to determine only if questions of fact were at issue, which would require a full trial.

Health and Sex Education Classes

There are three constitutional arguments taken from the first amendment which are frequently asserted to support parental requests to withdraw their children from portions of the regular school curriculum. Parents may argue that the course establishes an official religion; that the course keeps the parents from the free exercise of their religion[12]; or that the course in some way invades the parents' privacy.[13] Before a court can decide whether or not to permit the withdrawal of a child on constitutional grounds, it must be determined that a constitutionally protected freedom has, in fact, been denied.

Health and sex education courses are often objected to on the grounds that they establish an official religion by promoting a particular religious viewpoint, or by denigrating all religions, thereby encouraging another "secular" religion.[14] However, it appears that many health and sex education courses are designed to stress that different religions have

[11] Valent *v* New Jersey State Board of Education, 114 N.J. Super. 63, 69, 274 A.2d 832, 835 (1971).

[12] "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"; U.S. Constitution, Amend. 1.

[13] The right to privacy is not specifically recognized in the Constitution, but it has been inferred from the Bill of Rights. See Griswold *v* Connecticut 381 U.S. 479, 85 S.Ct. 1687 (1965).

[14] See, for example: Citizens for Parental Rights *v* San Mateo County Board of Education, 51 C.A.3rd 1, 124 Cal. Rptr. 68 (1975); Cornwell *v* State Board of Education, 314 F.Supp. 340 (D.Md. 1969). Health and sex education courses are often characterized by the courts as public health measures. As such, it becomes more difficult for parents to remove their children from courses because of a 1944 Supreme Court opinion which held that rights of parenthood and religion must yield when it is in the public interest. Prince *v* Massachusetts, 321 U.S. 158 (1944). Although the Supreme Court specifically limited this holding to the circumstance present in this case (child selling religious tracts in violation of child labor laws) this case is often cited as authority for compelling attendance at health and sex education courses when they can be seen as being in the public interest.

different points of view on sensitive subjects such as birth control, abortion, divorce, and masturbation. In order to maintain a neutral perspective to the course, none of the religious viewpoints are presented unfavorably. To avoid the charge that the course promotes a "secular" religion, students are often encouraged to turn to their religious counselors for help with any personal problems they may have.

An example of a school program which was found to be a violation of the establishment clause of the first amendment occurred in a 1970 Virginia case.[15] In this instance, religious teachers came into the regular public school classroom and taught the children, whose parents had consented, about the various religions. The children whose parents had not consented were given a study period. The court held that the program was an unconstitutional establishment of religion because it made use of a tax-supported public school system to aid religious groups in spreading their religion. For that reason, the court ordered that the course be discontinued.

This case illustrates the effect of a finding that a course violates the establishment clause of the first amendment. Once a course is found to violate the establishment clause, it must be abolished, whether or not attendance is mandatory. Excusing students from attending in no way changes the nature of the content of the course. However, if a program challenged as a violation of the establishment clause is found *not* to be in violation of the constitution (as in the health education programs described earlier), the parent requesting that a child be excused from the course is in the same legal position as the parent who has no religious basis for a request.[16]

Religious Values

Parents may assert that what is being taught to their child in some way prevents the parents from inculcating their religious values in their child, in violation of the first amendment clause guaranteeing free exercise of religious belief.[17] One of the leading cases in this vein is from Wisconsin, decided by the United States Supreme Court in 1972.[18] Amish

[15] Vaughn *v* Reed, 313 F.Supp. 431 (W.D.Va. 1970).

[16] For a complete discussion of the issues involved in establishment of religion see: Gerald Gunther, *Cases and Materials on Constitutional Law*. Foundation Press, 1975. pp. 1452-1504.

[17] Parents, as guardians of their children, have an immediate and direct interest in their children's spiritual and religious development. Schempp *v* School District of Abington Township, 177 F.Supp. 398 (P.D. Pa. 1959).

[18] Wisconsin *v* Yoder, 406 U.S. 205, 92 S.Ct. 1526 (1972).

parents refused to send their children to public schools beyond the eighth grade in violation of Wisconsin's law requiring all children to attend school up until the age of 16. The Amish parents argued that their children would be exposed to worldly ideas such as intellectual and scientific achievement, self-distinction, competitiveness, worldly success, and social life, which would inhibit the children's smooth transition into the adult Amish community. The Supreme Court first agreed with the parents' assertion that to send their children to high school would violate the parents' right of free exercise of religion. However, the state may override even a constitutionally protected right in the process of fulfilling a "compelling" state interest. Because of the particular characteristics of Amish society (agricultural, self-reliant, and law abiding) the court could not say that education beyond the eighth grade was a necessity, as it might be if a child were being prepared for life in the rest of society. The parents were, therefore, permitted to keep their children home after the eighth grade.

In a more recent case, however, the court determined that the state's interest in educating its youth overrode the parents' claims based on free exercise of religion.[19] New Hampshire parents requested permission to have their children removed from the classroom whenever audiovisual equipment was used. To permit children to be exposed to the equipment was in violation of the tenets of the Apostolic Lutheran faith. Evidence was given that audiovisual equipment was used in nearly every class, and that it is a preferred method of educators. The court held that to permit the children to leave the room every time the equipment was used would be to deny them an effective education. The court stated that parents may not make religious martyrs out of their children.

Unlike establishment of religion claims, free exercise claims are based upon some aspect of the curriculum which appears to be religiously neutral (such as the use of audiovisual equipment). It is the nature of the course as it affects the individual that is objectionable. Therefore, removal of the child from the objectionable portions of the curriculum may be appropriate unless to do so would deny the child an education altogether.[20]

A right of privacy is not specifically mentioned in the constitution. However, the Supreme Court has often recognized that certain areas of privacy are guaranteed by the constitution. Activities relating to mar-

[19] Davis *v* Page, 385 F.Supp. 395 (D.N.H. 1974).

[20] For a complete discussion of the issues involved in free exercise of religion see: Gerald Gunther. *Cases and Materials on Constitutional Law*. Foundation Press, 1975. pp. 1505-1531.

riage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, child rearing and education, and abortion are to a certain extent protected by the constitutional right of privacy. The fact that an activity is found to be within a constitutional zone of privacy does not mean that there can be no regulation whatever of the activity. It simply means that any regulation may not be unnecessarily broad.[21]

In a California case, which is fairly typical of cases of this type, parents alleged that their rights of privacy had been invaded by a voluntary sex education course because students were "forced" to reveal innermost thoughts and details of family life.[22] The fact that the course was in no way compulsory led the court to conclude that there was no unnecessarily broad invasion of privacy. In addition, the court found that students' privacy rights were not invaded since they were not *forced* to reveal their innermost thoughts.[23]

Voluntary Courses

In anticipation of parental requests to have children excused from controversial courses, school administrators may make the course voluntary. Parental objections to voluntary courses are generally based on a feeling that the children who are excused will be stigmatized by the remaining students, with the result that parents who otherwise would ask that their child be excused, might not do so.

The legal positions in such a situation stem from two interpretations of the religious free exercise clause of the first amendment. (As discussed earlier, unless a parent bases a claim on religious grounds, he or she would not be granted a remedy.) One view of the free exercise clause sees it as being written solely in terms of what a state may not *require* of an individual. Others take peer pressure into account and maintain that even though a child might not be required to take a course which violates religious beliefs, the child may take a course in order to avoid being stigmatized as a non-conformist.[24]

State courts are split in their interpretations of the free exercise

[21] Roe *v* Wade, 410 U.S. 113, 93 S.Ct. 705 (1973). For a complete discussion of the issues involved in rights of privacy see: Gerald Gunther. *Cases and Materials on Constitutional Law*. Foundation Press, 1975. pp. 616-56.

[22] Citizens for Parental Rights *v* San Mateo County Board of Education, 51 C.A.3rd 1, 124 Ca.Rptr. 68 (1975).

[23] See, also: Medeiros *v* Kiyosaki, 478 P.2d 314 (Ha. 1970), where parents charged that showing a family life film to fifth and sixth graders invaded their privacy. Since viewing the film was contingent upon parental consent, the court held that no invasion of privacy had occurred.

[24] Abington School District *v* Schempp, 374 U.S. 203 (1963).

clause. Courts in Hawaii and Michigan have held that the voluntary nature of elementary school sex education programs kept the courses from violating the constitution.[25]

In a similar California case, the court again upheld a school-initiated excusal system where high school students could be excused from a sex education course in its entirety, or they could be excused from those portions of the course violating their religious beliefs.[26] This decision seemed to turn at least in part upon the fact that students could be excused from the entire course if they wished. Students exercising their option in this way would not be in direct and immediate contact with their peers when they did so, thereby decreasing the amount of peer pressure which they might have been subjected to had they been permitted to leave the room only during objectionable portions of the course.

State court decisions may go the other way as well. The New Hampshire court that denied parents the right to have their children excused whenever audiovisual equipment was used because to do so would deny the children an education, also based its decision on the situation which resulted when school administrators experimented with excusing the children.[27] The excused children teased the others and called them sinners. This often upset the remaining children, and one teacher testified that several children had come to him crying after such an episode.

In holding that a program where religious teachers came into the classroom to teach about religion violated the establishment clause, a Virginia court noted as well that the voluntary program was divisive and disruptive.[28] The court felt that the pressure resulting from separating some children might have influenced some parents to permit their child to participate, even though they might not otherwise have done so.

School-initiated Excusal Systems

The constitutionality of school-initiated excusal systems is not a settled question. The outcome of a controversy involving a school-initiated excusal system must depend to a great extent on the view of the free exercise clause taken by the particular court. Other factors to be considered include the age of the students, and the degree of pressure

[25] Medeiros v Kiyosaki, 478 P.2d 314 (Ha. 1970); Hobolth v Greenway, 218 N.W. 2d 98 (Mich. App. 1974).

[26] Citizens for Parental Rights v San Mateo County Board of Education, 51 C.A.3rd 1, 124 Cal.Rptr. 68 (1975).

[27] Davis v Page, 385 F.Supp. 395 (D.N.H. 1974).

[28] Vaughn v Reed, 313 F.Supp. 431 (W.D.Va. 1970).

a student might be subjected to when exercising his or her right to skip certain portions of the curriculum.

The right of parents to remove their children, however, appears to be more clear-cut. Courts usually do not permit parents to remove their children when they object to exposing their children to certain material for reasons other than religious freedom or privacy. There no longer appears to be any presumption that a parent is the best judge of a child's abilities and needs. In addition, as indicated by some courts' decisions on school-initiated excusal systems, there is sometimes a feeling that to excuse some students from certain portions of the curriculum would be divisive and disruptive of a well-ordered school system.

If a parent were successful in showing that a school's program violated the establishment clause of the first amendment, the need to remove the child would be obviated. Once a course has been shown to violate the establishment clause, it must be discontinued.

If, however, parents are able to show that a school program infringes on the parents' right to bring up their child according to the tenets of their chosen religion, as guaranteed by the free exercise clause of the first amendment, the child may be excused from the objectionable portions of the curriculum unless to do so would deny the child an education altogether. These claims generally challenge some educational practice that seems to be religiously neutral, but that impacts upon certain individuals by denying them the ability to practice their religion.

The claimed right to teach one's child about matters such as contraception, marriage, and divorce without interference from public schools seems closely related to the right to take part in these activities without state interference. The Supreme Court has upheld the latter, finding them to be within a constitutionally protected zone of privacy. As of this time, however, the lower courts have refused to extend the zone of privacy to include an exclusive right to teach one's child about these subjects. If such an extension were to be made, it is likely that the course would have to be abolished, for like courses that violate the establishment clause of the first amendment, a course that invaded one parent's right of privacy, would invade all parents' rights of privacy. No number of excused students would change the offensive nature of the course.

Parents and Other Citizens in Curriculum Development

Delmo Della-Dora

Delmo Della-Dora says it's a mistake to speak of "the role of parents" because each parent is different and has a different contribution to make. He shows how parents can participate at each step of the curriculum planning process.

Parents and other community people can be effective and active participants in planning curriculum, carrying it out, and evaluating its effectiveness. In short, parents are capable of being equal partners with teachers, administrators, students, and other community people in every major aspect of curriculum development. This is *not* to say that every parent has the skills, knowledge—and time—needed to cope well with all aspects of curriculum planning. However, that disclaimer is also true for individual teachers and administrators, and also for individual curriculum specialists and curriculum generalists.

This point of view may seem unrealistic to some, even outrageous to others. However, there is ample evidence to support these assertions: many parents have done and are doing what is described in the opening statement—and the teachers and administrators involved in these situations can attest to the value of the parents' intensive and extensive participation.

Consider the various roles which educators have perceived as being appropriate for parents in the schools:

Parents as Helpers. Educators have welcomed parent help in conducting field trips, in fund raising for school equipment or supplies, as classroom aides, and in other activities in which parents provide unskilled or semi-skilled labor for the school, under school direction. This is the oldest form of parent participation in schools and probably is the most widespread today.

Parents as Resource People. After World War II, many school people recognized that some parents had knowledge or skills which could contribute to curriculum development or to classroom instruction. Such parents might have a hobby to share with students in co-curriculum activities (stamp collecting, sports, bird-watching, hiking, or knowledge of a particular job field to share during a talk in connection with a unit of study, or, perhaps, a specialized area of skill/knowledge which a parent could furnish as information for a curriculum study group). Three examples from experience illustrate this function: a bus driver who loved to show his slides of China (taken during his time as a U.S. Marine) to elementary school children; a free-lance writer who welcomed opportunities to talk to middle school students about his hobby of studying "black hole" phenomena; the black physician who wanted to meet with minority high school students to encourage them to try to enter the field of medicine.

Parents as Consultants. Some parents have specialized knowledge and/or skills which individual teachers or curriculum study groups can utilize on a long-term basis. Three examples illustrate this: a landscape gardener who worked with a middle school committee of students, parents, and teachers on an environmental project for improving school grounds; a labor union official and an industry personnel officer working with a high school social studies curriculum group to develop a labor relations unit; a parent trained as a health educator advising an elementary school curriculum committee on content and methods for incorporating health education into parts of the elementary school curriculum.

Parents as Partners. Some parents have the interest, time, and skills needed to be full-fledged, equal participants with educators either in particular aspects of school operation or in general curriculum development. Elsewhere in this publication, Dorothy Rich and her colleagues argue in favor of parents as partners in teaching and have persuasive data to bolster their viewpoint. In California, the legislature has heavily sanctioned parent involvement by laws passed in recent years concerning school improvement program activities for local school districts and in teacher preparation programs under provisions of the Ryan Act. School districts in California that want to receive state funds for school program improvement (curriculum development and/or staff development) *must* have an elected School Site Council and this group must have parents (elementary schools) or parents and students (secondary schools) who comprise *exactly one half of the membership* of the Council. In teacher preparation programs, every college and university offering a teaching credential program must describe how it will involve parents (and other

community people) in planning for, carrying out, and evaluating these programs. Evidence of their involvement must also be demonstrated and verified.

The Myth of "Role"

More will be said shortly about how parents can, and why they should, be partners in curriculum development. To do so, however, requires that we deal with the various notions of the "role" of parents —or what "they" can and should do. There are at least two fallacious assumptions upon which such a question is based.

One myth subscribed to by some educators (and parents) is that the schools "belong" to educators. It is certainly a normal consequence, after years of training and experience, for members of any trade or profession to develop a proprietary sense about the jobs they hold. It represents, in its most positive aspects, a sense of professional commitment, pride in one's work and accomplishments, and a desire to develop specialized skills and knowledge needed to become more effective. In its negative aspects, this sense of ownership fails to allow for recognition of the fundamental principle of a democratic society, namely, that people affected by decisions have a right to participate in making them—that schools "belong" to everyone affected by their operation, including teachers, administrators, and board members but also including parents, students, and other community people.[1] Even among educators who believe in this basic democratic principle, there are many who believe that parents and other community people simply do not know enough to be partners with educators in school matters. They perceive such attempts to involve parents as representing either concessions to popular political pressures or the ill-conceived thinking of fuzzy-minded idealistic liberals—or both.

Part of the reason for negative reaction to parents' involvement as partners is due to thinking in terms of stereotypes. "Parents" are not a homogeneous mass with common characteristics. They have *only* one trait in common, namely, they have children. Parents come in all sizes, shapes, attitudes, sexes, races, ethnic groups, and display all kinds of skills, attitudes, and interests. There *is* no answer to the question, "What is the role of parents in educational decision making?" This is an abstract question which can only be answered on a theoretical basis. We can

[1] For a more extended treatment of this subject, see Delmo Della-Dora, "Democracy and Education: Who Owns the Curriculum?" *Educational Leadership* 34(1): 51-59; October 1976.

only respond sensibly and rationally to the question, "What can particular parents share in doing in this school (district) concerning the following [specified] educational issues?"

In brief, to remove one major impediment to successful involvement of parents in school activities, we must stop thinking of parents collectively. We have to initiate, or improve, ways of discovering what *individual* parents are capable of and interested in contributing *this year* in *this school or this district* for these *specific educational purposes.*

Parents as Partners in Curriculum Development

Using the Tyler rationale as a means of describing curriculum development processes, the following descriptions offer some brief illustrations of how parents may be partners and, on occasion, even leaders in curriculum improvement projects.[2]

Curriculum workers will recall that Tyler asks four questions. To paraphrase, they are: 1. What are the educational *purposes* to be achieved?; 2. What educational *experiences* are appropriate to achieve the purposes?; 3. How should the *experiences be organized* for optimum learning; and 4. How can we *evaluate* whether the purposes have been achieved?

In deciding on educational purposes, parents certainly must be equal partners. No person is an expert on what someone else's philosophy, values, and priorities should be. Public institutions must derive their central purposes from the public. However, in order for wise decisions to be made the people deciding educational purposes should know what the alternatives are and what the consequences of each alternative would be. Won't parents, particularly in these times, be more cost conscious and conservative in their orientation than most educators? Most evidence available is to the contrary.

Diverse groups composed of parents, teachers, administrators, and parents usually end up making decisions which provide for more scope and flexibility than most of the individuals in it might have chosen prior to group participation. Group processes, conducted in an effective fashion, tend to foster tolerance for diversity, greater open-mindedness, and more respect for minority viewpoints. This fact first came home to me forcibly in 1950 when I was principal of twelve small country schools. A highly conservative rural community, which had previously opposed school taxes, subsequently voted overwhelmingly to build new schools.

[2] Ralph W. Tyler. *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970. (First published in 1949.)

The turning point? An elected group of 25 parents, 25 teachers, 15 students, and two administrators spent a year together planning the curriculum of the proposed new schools. The first question for the group was, "Let's suppose there were no schools in this community. Why should we have any? What difference should there be in our community as a result of having schools?" Some parents turned out to be leaders in the group in clarifying purposes focusing on career preparation and others were co-equal, with educators, in their ability to identify and clarify other major goals of schooling.

Once educational purposes are agreed upon, plans must be made for the educational experiences which should be provided for the achievement of these purposes. Teachers and subject specialists certainly are key people in identifying experiences which can be carried out within the school building and school grounds. However, parents are able to provide ideas about activities, other parents can serve as resource people, as helpers, or as consultants. It is interesting and exciting in working with parents to see them provide leadership in identifying educational experiences for students in the community, away from the school. At this phase of curriculum development a field trip resources manual might be developed jointly by educators and other community people to suit the purposes and experiences sought for various grade levels and any (or all) subject fields. In some districts, this stage of curriculum development is one in which it is possible to establish community-based educational projects for students to work on with parents and other community people. This can take the form of work-study and cooperative work experience for secondary schools or community assistance projects involving adults and elementary school age children.

Organizing school experiences (daily schedule, scope and sequence issues, articulation, defining subject areas) is an area in which school people are usually the leaders initially. However, even in these areas the initial advantage that many teachers have in familiarity with different forms of school organization can be matched by many parents who have lived in a number of places. A common activity during this phase of curriculum planning is to visit schools and observe other approaches. Many parents are as capable as educators in observing, in hearing reactions of the people in the schools visited to their form of school organization, and in arriving at sound conclusions concerning appropriate ways of organizing educational experiences to achieve stated purposes for the curriculum of their own schools.

Evaluating achievement of purposes is usually so poorly done in our schools that the participation of parents is bound to make it more

effective. Use of group standardized test scores has the well known disadvantages of narrow focus on limited goals, built-in bias toward racial and ethnic minority groups, and lack of validity (none being designed to measure specific educational purposes of any given school or district).

The increasing use of performance criteria ("competencies") does not solve the problem because they are, at best, a sampling of indicators of achievement of purposes rather than valid measures of actual achievement of major educational goals.

Many parents can help in developing and carrying out the more varied and comprehensive evaluation processes that schools need to improve their educational programs. This is probably most true in the area of "formative" evaluation, that is, in providing useful feedback to teachers and administrators about what is happening in the educational program while it is going on. Parents can assist in helping determine the kinds of data that might be helpful in redesigning curriculum and can also help gather it.

An example is in a middle school in which a planning group concerned about discipline decided to observe and record specified kinds of disruptive pupil behavior in selected locations in various schools. Parents and educators agreed on what was to be observed and how it was to be recorded. Parent volunteers actually did most of the observing/recording. Results were discussed by educators and parents together as the basis for deciding what to do in the school curriculum and in school procedures to deal with the discipline problems noted. Major program changes resulted from this data-gathering.

The foregoing provide a few illustrations of how parents may be partners and leaders in curriculum development. One problem is probably quite evident, though—not enough schools engage in any kind of systematic curriculum development processes, not even with just teachers and administrators involved. What passes for curriculum development in many places is simply a rearrangement of subject-matter content, perhaps with the addition of new material based on new laws or new board policies. Increasingly "curriculum development" means drawing up new lists of competencies or performance standards to be achieved at various grade levels. The bottom line is that parents can be partners in curriculum development only *if* the situation allows teachers and administrators to do so also.

Getting Parents Involved

Many schools and school districts report apathy on the part of parents and other community people. However, is it possible that all,

or most, parents don't care about improved education? That's highly unlikely. Parent involvement is always high under the following conditions:

1. *Variety of options.* As Ira Gordon points out in his chapter, parent interests are varied and so is their availability. Consider the specific ways in which parents/community members can be helpers, resource people, consultants, and partners in the school or district. Engage a varied group of educators and other community people in thinking of options that might be viable in the setting.

2. *School support.* The principal is usually the key. Principal support and interest can energize the same conscious and latent feelings among many teachers. An interested nucleus of teachers can even do it alone with little support from the principal but it's more difficult. Parents cannot be involved effectively, obviously, if there is no one at school who really wants to be involved with them.

3. *Coordination/leadership.* It helps if someone can take care of the routine functions that precede and follow meetings. In some schools, the principal or teacher does this. In others, parent volunteers do so.

4. *Openness/honesty.* People working with each other on curriculum development have the same need to know what the real agenda is as do people working together on any issue. At times, some educators have hidden motives for calling parents in or set up unnecessary barriers because they are wary of what might be recommended. Sometimes particular parents and certain community people have personal or political axes to grind as they meet with educators. The air needs to be cleared early in the process so that all agendas are out in the open if effective curriculum development is desired.

5. *Skills or group decision making.* As has already been noted, it is a vital ingredient in the success of cooperative educator-parent decision making. Skills of shared leadership can be learned by all parties involved. The need to learn them should be made explicit by whoever recognizes the need first.

Concluding Comments

Parents have been, and are, engaged in curriculum development in many locations. They have been effective to the same extent that teachers and administrators have been in those same settings, by and large. The keys to their success are not based on skills and knowledge of sub-

ject matter, although those attributes are helpful. Success is determined in major part by the extent to which educators accept their participation, by the variety of options available for participation, by availability of coordination services, by the degree of openness and honesty which all those involved display toward one another, and by the degree of skill in shared leadership and shared decision making.

"A camel is a horse designed by a committee" say the cynics. The criticism will be justified if the requisite decision-making skills, knowledge, and attitudes are absent and if group members do not learn them. However, there have been too many curriculum manuals developed by curriculum specialists that are unused and simply gathering dust on shelves to believe that one-person (or small group) "decisions" really are decisions. It is *not* more efficient for the experts to make decisions in less time than a varied group would if no one carries out the decisions.

There are individual parents in every school attendance area and every school district who can be not only helpers of teachers but also resource people, consultants, and partners. Educators can reach out to welcome their help or parents can volunteer. Educators and other community people need each other: their combined energies can result in drastically improved learning for students in most places. All this can be done with a little more time in planning, a measure of mutual trust and faith, and little or no extra money. Who can afford to pass up such a bargain?

Some Things Change – Some Do Not!

Ned S. Hubbell

A public relations expert who has conducted more than 100 polls for local school districts, Ned Hubbell points to dramatic shifts in the population: more than two-thirds of all adults now have no children in school. The way to communicate with both parents and non-parents, he says, is to get them involved in school affairs.

I'm almost a "non"-parent! For the first time in two dozen years of adult life, my "vested interest" in the public schools is about to run out. Next summer, the last of our offspring will graduate from high school. When that happens, for the first time in 25 years, my wife and I will no longer be public school parents. And, as far as we know, we'll never go back to that status!

In short, we are one year away from joining the great majority of adults in this country. We're in our final year as part of a dwindling public school parent population. As student enrollments drop, so does the percent of parents in the community.

Want proof? Check the demographic data of the ten years of Gallup polls of the "Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools." The following table shows the shift in makeup of America's adults since Gallup conducted the first poll in 1969:

	Public School Parents	Private/Parochial School Parents	No Children in School
1969	44%	7%	50%
1978	28	5	68

Composition of Gallup Sample

The U.S. Bureau of the Census tells us that in 1990, for the first time in our history, the number of people over 55 will be greater than

the entire K-12 school population. That means, continues the Bureau, one out of every five Americans will be at least 55 years old.

As a pollster for public school districts, it's my belief that this transformation of the public has had a major effect on schools, especially in the decrease of public confidence in public schools.

Our firm has conducted over 100 public opinion polls for local school districts. As the 1970-71 school year began, we launched a ten-year study of citizens' attitudes toward public schools in the decade of the 70's. True, this composite study is in no way a national sampling of such attitudes. It is a barometer, at best, of trends in citizen attitudes toward local school districts. After eight years of the study, with 74 polls in the data, some trends have emerged.

As national opinion research has shown, our local polls indicate a decrease in public confidence in public schools. This opinion is not as evident among public school parents. But, non-parents show a significant drop in such confidence when compared to our findings in the early 70's.

This may have been fueled by a growing information gap between the schools and the public. While the majority (54%) of public school parents feel well informed about the schools in their community, only one out of every four citizens with no school-age children shares this opinion. Four out of every ten of these non-parents admit to knowing very little about the public schools. These significant differences between public school parents and non-parents are shown in the cumulative responses of 74 opinion polls:

	All Respondents	Public School Parents	No School-Age Children
Feel well informed	42%	54%	25%
Somewhat informed	29	31	30
Not too informed	25	14	40
Can't say	4	1	5

Public school parents feel better informed largely due to the experience of and reports given them by their children. We've sought the public's sources of information about their public schools.

Public school parents list these major sources of information as of our eight year composite study:

- Their children
- Newspapers
- Teachers, other school employees
- What other people say
- School district publications

Five years ago our study showed parents listed the press as their fourth major source of information about schools. Since then, it is apparent that newspapers are giving more coverage to the public schools in their community. School district publications are often few and far between (or discontinued as school boards make hard budget-cutting choices).

Those *adults with no school-age children* rely on these sources of information about public schools:

- Newspapers
- What other people say
- Children
- School district publications
- Teachers, other school employees

What do citizens want to know about the public schools in their community? Our polling showed this is the type of information requested (curriculum specialists, take note):

What's being taught? In short, curriculum information, especially in the basic skills. Citizens are also interested in student test results. While elementary parents feel fairly knowledgeable about the curriculum at those grade levels, secondary school parents do not share that feeling.

What teaching methods are being used by teachers? Parents and non-parents alike want to know more about reading instruction, and teaching methods in other basic skill areas.

How are school funds spent? Many citizens complain that "the only time we hear much about the budget is when the schools need more money." Adults want more information on budget priorities, possible cuts or increases in some areas. And they would like such information in simple, everyday language.

How are district policies formed? Many citizens are not familiar with the role, procedures, and deliberations of their local school board.

It's been said that "school is people"—teachers, support staff, administrators, and school board members. We've polled to see how the public rates the performance of major groups of school employees and officials. As a result, eight years into the 10-year trends study: the public gives significantly higher ratings to employees at the local school level than to central district management and the school board.

With four choices from which to select—excellent, good, fair, or

poor, our composite polls show these groups rated "good," or better—and in this order:

- School custodians, maintenance personnel
- School bus drivers
- Classroom teachers
- Principals
- School secretarial personnel
- Food service personnel
- Central district administrators
- School board

In short, the more involvement in the education of children and operation of the local school, the higher the performance rating. Those responsible for district management and policies receive a higher percentage of "fair" ratings.

In addition, there is a steadily growing opinion that the local public schools have enough money. Very, very few citizens we've polled believe the schools have *too much* money. The plurality think public schools have enough to provide a quality education for students.

One-half (50%) of the public school parents we have polled share this opinion, and four out of every 10 non-parents agree. Overall, 54% of all respondents polled in our cumulative study think schools have enough operating money to do everything that needs to be done. (Incidentally, in the early 70's only one out of every three citizens polled felt that way. Further, one out of every five citizens now gives the local public schools a "poor" rating on how school funds are spent.)

Another finding from our study should also be of interest and concern for those educators responsible for curriculum development. Public school parents are beginning to believe that schools today do not challenge students enough. An opinion research project done by the Kettering Foundation shows high school students sharing that opinion.

Our local district polling in the past three years reveals both public school parents and those with no school-age children support raising high school graduation requirements. Both parents and non-parents are strongly opposed to automatic promotion from grade to grade without the student first passing some form of competency examination.

In addition, our study reveals a growing feeling that is held by citizens (especially public school parents) that more citizens should be involved in how schools operate. The majority of adults polled in local districts in the past three years favor the use of citizen volunteers in schools serving as classroom aides, tutors, library aides, and assisting in

lunchrooms and on playgrounds. Thus far in the study of districts polled since 1976, two out of every ten public school parents said they would like to help out as a local school volunteer. One out of every 10 citizens with no school-age children would also like to serve in such a role.

There is a growing interest in helping out, as citizens, on committees at the local school level. The majority of public school parents feel a local school advisory council, which includes parents, is a good idea.

A solid majority of citizens polled by us at the district level favor the concept of community education. This feeling exists not only for adult education courses, but in citizen enrichment classes, instruction in upgrading job skills, senior citizen activities. As the adult population of the nation has changed, perhaps the public schools need to extend services to adults. Or, as one district's annual report proclaimed, "Your schools no longer serve K-12, but K-65."

According to an old saying, "Good deeds should speak for themselves." Yet in today's marketplace of public opinion, two out of every three adults have no contact, personally, with the public schools. All most citizens get as a source of curriculum information is via word of mouth or newspaper headlines. The "bread 'n butter" curriculum story is not "hard" news to reporters.

Interpreting the curriculum is part of that "good job." Polls show the public is genuinely interested in knowing more about the content and techniques involved in today's curriculum. Perhaps it's time to make more of an effort to tell that curriculum story, even the bread 'n butter details. More than ever, schools need to prove to citizens that schools *do* teach children how to read, to understand math, and to express themselves in writing. Too many citizens do not share that belief.

If the schools don't take the initiative to publicize the curriculum story, who will?

Needed: A Broader Definition of Citizen Participation

John W. Alden

Is service as a school volunteer a form of citizen participation? The Executive Director of the National School Volunteer Program insists that it is. And, says John Alden, a lot of people would rather perform useful service than sit on the sidelines as members of advisory councils.

We live in a society that depends upon many kinds of volunteers — some who give time, some who give money, some who give freely of their special skills and talents, full-time or part-time. If we look closely we will see that almost everything that matters to us, almost anything that embodies our commitment to the way human lives should be lived and cared for, depends upon some form — and most often many forms — of volunteerism.

Margaret Mead

Government cannot and should not dictate to citizens the forms their participation shall take. It should attempt instead to put the resources for effective participation in the hands of citizens themselves.

Senator Edward Kennedy

"Citizen participation" and "parent involvement" are oft-used phrases these days. What do they mean? The answer depends on where you look.

Two-thirds of the people surveyed in a national census of volunteers classified their participation as givers of direct service.[1] But direct service is often ignored by social scientists who analyze trends in government. To them, citizen participation is interpreted narrowly to mean service on advisory boards and involvement in decision making.

For example, a publication called *Citizen Participation*[2] issued by the

[1] "American Volunteer." Washington, D.C.: ACTION, February 1975.

[2] *Citizen Participation*. Washington, D.C.: Community Services Administration, January 1978.

federal Community Services Administration lists actions which citizens are encouraged to take. They should read the *Federal Register*, serve on national and district advisory boards, participate through notification and review systems, and provide information through public hearings.

The program description given in that publication for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program indicates that grants are made to non-profit community organizations to develop volunteer service opportunities in the community for persons over age 60, yet citizen participation is not defined as the volunteer work they perform.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1974 (often called compensatory education) is described in the document as a formula grant program to extend and improve comprehensive educational programs for children who are economically disadvantaged. But the citizen participation mentioned is of only one type: serving on parent advisory councils.

A recent book by Stuart Langton[3] similarly limits citizen participation. Langton identifies four categories: citizen action, citizen involvement, electoral participation, and obligatory participation. No mention is made of direct service such as that given by school volunteers. Langton makes a passing reference to volunteer programs in a table entitled "Categories of Citizen Participation." But the reader would never suspect that millions of citizens have served for decades in schools and hospitals, museums and social programs, and have made a meaningful impact on the lives of fellow human beings.

As noted by Steinberg in Chapter 5, one of the forces behind increased parent involvement in the past 15 years has been mandated participation of citizens in federally-supported education programs. A study by the Institute for Responsive Education[4] concluded that the clearest and most consistent federal policy on citizen participation is to emphasize the advisory function of parents. The Head Start program is one of a few notable exceptions. I do not discount the importance of citizens advising on federal education programs, but I decry the limited interpretation of citizen participation to this single function, and I marvel that the highly regarded efforts of school volunteers and school volunteer programs across the country have gone largely unnoticed by the federal government.

[3] Stuart Langton. *Citizen Participation in America: Essays on the State of the Art*. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1978.

[4] Don Davies and others. *Patterns of Citizen Participation in Educational Decision Making*. Vol. 1: *Overview*. Boston: Institute for Responsive Education, 1978.

I suggest that the dominant activity of citizens who participate in education is not as it is defined in *Citizen Participation* or by Langton but rather service—service in the schools which helps to enrich the educational opportunities of children. Data from the 1974 census show that during the survey week (April 7-14, 1974), volunteers in education represented 15 percent of the total number of volunteers in the United States —about 2,271,000 persons—who worked an average of six hours per week. Fifty-seven percent spent between one and eight hours; 12 percent spent eight or more hours as involved citizens.

The evidence shows that people would rather be active participants than advisors. A few years ago more than 600 persons, representing 27 school districts, were interviewed in Chicago about problems in education and how they might be improved through citizen involvement.[5] They were asked, "Would you say that parents are too involved, not involved enough, or involved in just the right amount of their children's education?" Nearly 70 percent indicated that parents are not involved enough.

Another question asked if parents should have more control over their children's education, or whether educational decisions should be made by professionals. Nearly 59 percent of the parents who responded believed that "more parent control" was needed. However, respondents construed "more parent control" as direct involvement, not helping to make decisions on educational programs. Sixty-eight percent said that parents need to understand and know more about their children's education, and that parent-child-teacher relationships should be improved. They listed:

- Increased parent understanding of their children (22.7 percent)
- More knowledge of their children's education (17.3 percent)
- Improvement or enhancement of parent-child-teacher relationships (27.4 percent)

Responses suggesting involvement in the governance of education scored much lower:

- Parent involvement and teacher accountability (5.9 percent)
- Parent involvement in decision-making process (8.4 percent)
- Complete community control of schools (1.3 percent)

These data, not widely circulated, suggest that public policy has misinterpreted (or misdirected) the interests and energies of parents and

[5] "Toward Greater Citizen Participation in Public Education." Chicago: Committee for Citizen Involvement in Public Education, December 1975.

volunteers. Clearly, citizens in Chicago and elsewhere prefer to contribute substantively to children's learning rather than to become involved with financial and educational accountability through service on advisory councils.

Langton credits an increasing interest in citizen participation to: 1. the decline of the influence of "mediating institutions" such as the family, church, schools, fraternal organizations, political parties, and others; 2. the growth of government; and 3. the ability of citizens to learn almost instantly via mass media of the abuses of power and poor performance of public officials and major social institutions (government, school, or church). He traces substantial increases in citizen participation to widespread citizen distrust of administrative agencies which may exceed or abuse their discretionary powers.

By contrast, school volunteer programs focus not on distrust but on the goals of education. Volunteers believe they can effect positive changes through their personal participation in the education and lives of children. Rather than sitting on the sidelines, they prefer to tutor in reading or math or serve as classroom aides. In the process, they learn about the needs of our institutions, and they become caring, sensitive advocates for better schools.

How to Start Your Volunteer Program

Experienced coordinators of school volunteer programs agree that these steps, taken before recruiting the first volunteer, help to structure a successful program:

1. *Examine your needs.* How can school volunteers help with problems?

2. *Investigate the climate.* Do teachers want volunteers? Are they willing to plan so that the volunteers' time is well used? You may need to educate teachers and administrators about what school volunteers are doing in other communities.

3. *Talk with representatives of all the groups you will want to involve in your school volunteer program.* First discuss your ideas with the superintendent and with school board members and teachers. Don't miss the teachers' organizations, principals, the PTA and other parent groups, senior citizens' organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and other local service clubs and women's groups, nearby colleges and universities.

4. *Assess your resources.* What support exists in the community to help you plan the program?

5. *Set up an advisory committee.* Involve all groups whose support you will seek as you begin to plan and set policy for your school volunteer program.

6. *Select goals which have specific, measurable objectives.* If your goals are to raise student achievement in reading and math, reduce absenteeism in the high school, and improve the community's attitudes and involvement in the schools, how will you know whether these goals have been achieved?

7. *Establish a system for recording volunteer hours and types of contributions.* Record the hours of training as well as hours of volunteer service. Use your data to tell the community of your program's achievements and degree of involvement.

8. *Decide on your organizational pattern.* Draw up a job description for the position of districtwide school volunteer coordinator and for any other paid staff members. Determine what types of skills this person should have. Determine who will interview and screen volunteer applicants. Who will coordinate the volunteer program within each individual school? Will a teacher or other staff member receive the teachers' requests for volunteer assistance? A good building coordinator who has been trained in the job's responsibilities and techniques can make the difference between mediocre and excellent use of volunteer services. The building-level coordinator of volunteers should have some experience as a school volunteer and be willing to give five to ten hours a week to the program for at least one semester.

9. *Write job descriptions for all the tasks for which volunteers will be sought.* Teachers will list what kinds of help they want at which hours of which days; the job descriptions will be useful in the screening interview to help prospective volunteers think about where they would like to serve.

10. *Get written school board support for your school volunteer program.* Such proof of support gives your program added prestige in the community and will be helpful in talking with some teachers and principals. The school board may set up an advisory committee and ask it to draw up guidelines for utilization of volunteers in the schools. The volunteer coordinator should make periodic reports to the school board.

11. *Learn the health requirements for school volunteers.* Most states require tuberculin skin tests or chest x-rays of all who work with children. Perhaps you can arrange to have volunteers take the test at several schools or arrange for transportation to the health clinic.

12. *Check on other state or local policy matters relating to volun-*

teers. Some states have insurance policies which cover volunteers as well as teachers and other employees. Check on rules for workers' compensation, and on policy decisions such as whether volunteers may ride the school buses with their children, serve in their own child's classroom, or bring preschool children along on days they work at school. Can senior citizens be given free lunches at school on days they are on duty?

13. *Develop recruitment literature.* Most school volunteer programs produce their own leaflets and posters; some recruit by sending letters to parents of students, leaving printed bookmarks in the local library, or using public service announcements and newspaper articles.

14. *Plan recruiting strategies.* Find out where other community agencies get volunteers and how and where other school volunteer programs recruit.

15. *Plan a system for maintaining volunteer morale.* The coordinator must plan to keep in touch with volunteers, teachers, and staff members who participate in the program and to provide ways for them to meet and discuss the program. Volunteer appreciation and recognition take many forms, from a teacher's thank-you or a hand-written note from a student to formal recognition ceremonies and certificates. Many coordinators believe that sending a volunteer to a workshop or promoting the volunteer to more challenging assignments are effective ways to honor outstanding service.

16. *Plan for a continuing evaluation of the program.* Many of the results of a good school volunteer program cannot be measured — the change in a child's attitude toward learning, improvement in a student's self-image, the warmth of the volunteer-child relationship. But all participants in the program should be asked to evaluate the program from their own point of view. Evaluation should find out if the program's specific goals and objectives are being reached.

17. *Establish a communications system.* Communications should include (a) personal and phone contact with coordinators and other program staff members; (b) meetings for volunteers so that they can discuss their service and learn about the program and other opportunities; (c) a school volunteer newsletter published regularly and sent to all volunteers and program participants; and (d) an annual report which shows the school board, administration, and the community that the program "makes a difference."

—— Adapted from *School Volunteer Program*, 1978. $3.00 from National School Volunteer Program, Inc., 300 N. Washington St., Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

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